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A MAN'S GIFT

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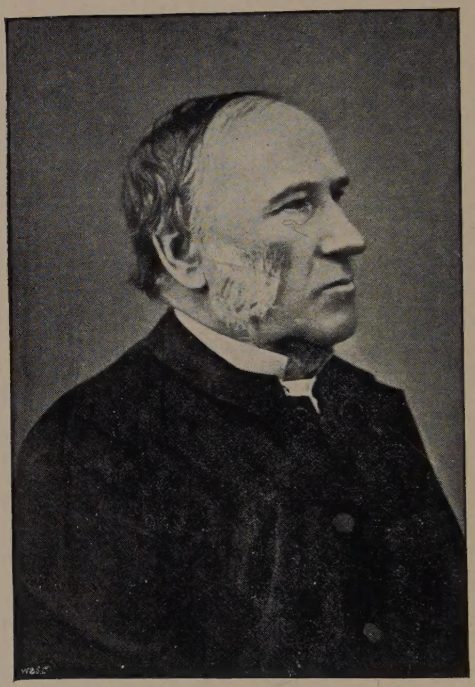

John Abercrombie
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A MAN'S GIFT

And Other Sermons

BY THE LATE

ALEXANDER MACLEOD, D.D.

CLAUGHTON

WITH MEMORIAL SKETCH BY THE REV. A. G. PEARSE

AND PERSONAL REMINISCENCES BY THE

REV. PRINCIPAL FAIRBAIRN, D.D.

London

JAMES NISBET & CO.

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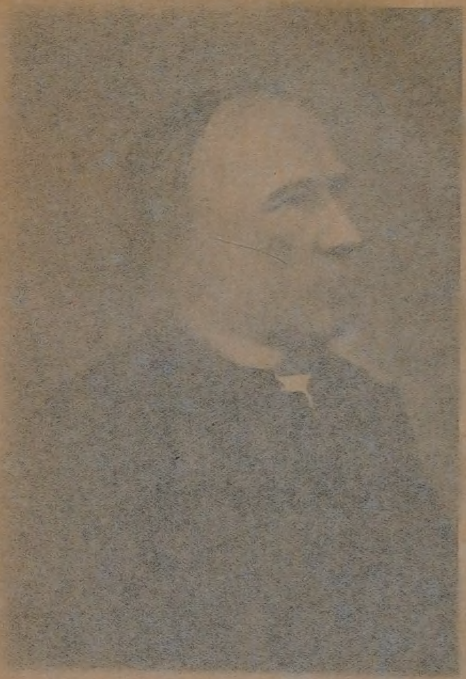

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PREFATORY NOTE

It is now fully three years since Dr. MacLeod ceased from his labours and entered into his rest.

During those three years many of his friends, both in this country and America, have been constantly inquiring of me when a memorial volume was to be published. The delay in responding to this request has been caused, not by any lack of material, but from its superabundance, and the difficulty of making such a selection as will satisfy his friends and justify publication.

In the work of selection I have been most kindly assisted by Dr. MacLeod's friend, the Rev. A. H. Drysdale, M.A., of Morpeth, who has also undertaken the labour of seeing the book through the press.

Some explanation may be needed for a Marriage Address being included in a volume of sermons: the reason is simply this:—On many of these occasions where Dr. MacLeod officiated, the parties afterwards asked for a copy of the words used at the ceremony: for obvious reasons this could not be complied with, and the reply he usually gave was, "That some day he would publish it, when all who wished might have it."

It is doubtful if the words in print can convey as intense a meaning to the reader as when they were spoken in his sympathetic voice, and with his gracious manner, to young people starting on life's journey.

Be that as it may, the address is given now because of his promise.

ELIZABETH MACLEOD.

BIRKENHEAD, 1894.

MEMORIAL SKETCH

By Rev. ANDREW G. FLEMING, Paisley.

On the last Sunday of February 1844, a quiet country town in the Middle Ward of Lanarkshire, flanked by an old feudal keep, lay wreathed in snow, which had drifted in the strath to the depth of several feet. For many of the villagers the block around their dwellings, and on all the thoroughfares leading to the town, was a great disappointment. Their young minister, who had been ordained on the preceding Tuesday, and of whom very great expectations had been formed, was to be introduced to his "charge" that day. Many snows, however, could not chill the ardour of the faithful. Wading knee-deep through the drift, the town portion of the audience mustered in goodly numbers in their comparatively new and handsome church. A few adventurous souls had even wrestled through from neighbouring hamlets, to be present on the interesting occasion. At length the new minister, preceded by the venerable beadle, appeared in his new Geneva gown and bands. He was a young man of about twenty-six years of age, height rather below medium, with nothing remarkable about his appearance save a mass of black unkempt

hair, obscuring the proportions of a dome-like brow, from under which flashed a pair of small but piercing black eyes. The beginning of the service revealed a voice of great power and singularly distinct enunciation, whilst the prayer touched chords of deepest tenderness. The text which announced the key-note of the new ministry was distinct and clear—"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." At first the preacher's manner was awkward and embarrassed. By-and-bye he forgot all about the new gown and bands. A fresh definition of prophecy, not foretelling but *forthtelling*, caught the ear of the audience. Thought followed thought, illustration succeeded illustration, disclosing the unity of God's Word and the central aim of preaching. Long ere the close the conviction had deepened in the audience, that a new power for God and the truth had come into play with the new man and the new ministry. That man was Alexander MacLeod, and that snow-wreathed hamlet the town of Strathaven, the scene of his first pastorate.

Before proceeding to say something of the new man and his new methods, we may pause to group together a few facts in regard to his previous history. Alexander MacLeod was born at Nairn on the 7th October 1817, but at an early stage of his childhood removed with his parents to Glasgow. His first intelligent outlook on the universe was thus, not across the waters of the Moray Firth to the Sutors, which guard the entrance to Cromarty, but on the Clyde, flowing gently through the "green" onward to scenes of more romantic beauty. In St. James's Parish School he obtained his elementary

education, and found in Mr. MacNab, afterwards of the High School, the first of his many life-teachers. It was not a far cry from St. James's School to the University, which at that date occupied its ancient and venerable seat in the High Street. Among the young red-gowned alumni, who in 1834 paced the spacious quadrangles for the first time, young MacLeod had a place. His preparation in the classics having been defective, student life was at first a drudgery. There was one compensation, however, that came by way of relief—every Saturday Sir Daniel Sandford lectured on some literary and classical theme in the "Common Hall." The following session introduced him to more congenial studies. In Logic and Belles-Lettres he carried off the prize for the best poem on "The Age of Chivalry," and in the session succeeding that again, he stood high in the "Honours" list of the Moral Philosophy Class. The atmosphere which pervaded the classrooms at that time was especially electrical. James Halley had left a name which was still an inspiration among the students, whilst Archibald Tait, Halley's close competitor, had gone to win new laurels on other fields. Passages-at-arms between the Peel Club and the Liberal Association kept the intellectual life from stagnating. One of MacLeod's earliest attempts at public speaking was in the Rectorial contests, and was chronicled in the Glasgow newspapers of the day as a speech of promise and power. Outside the college curriculum the influences at work in his mental development were mainly three. Edward Irving, the traditions of whose preaching still lingered around St. John's and the east

of Glasgow, exercised through his books on prophecy a strong influence over him. Thomas Carlyle was rising to an imperial place over young and earnest souls. A. J. Scott, afterwards of Manchester, whose philosophic powers the late Archdeacon Hare rated so highly, was one of his early idols. Of formative influences nearer his own doors mention would require to be made of Harvey of the Calton, his own minister; of William Anderson of John Street, to whom afterwards he became colleague; and last not least, of John Edwards of Bridgeton. In the preaching of the last, as one of his early friends said, he found "truth wedded to beauty, earnestness in combination with the purest taste. The student could admire the polish of the blade when, along with the most uncultured of the audience, he felt the sharpness of the edge."

In 1839 MacLeod entered the Divinity Hall of the Relief Synod, then taught by Dr. Thomson of Paisley. After the ordinary theological course he was licensed to preach on May 2nd, 1843, by the Relief Presbytery of Glasgow. His sermons as a preacher were characterised by freshness of thought and force of delivery. One of them, entitled "Mountain Worship," was published; another, on the "Pure in heart seeing God," was long remembered by those who heard it. During his student days he had also published his prize poem, "The Age of Chivalry." With such a record he was a picked man among the vacant churches of the period; and when his settlement at Strathaven, which we have just described, took place, it was amid high hopes that a career of no ordinary interest had begun.

If the writer dwells longer on the Strathaven period, from 1844 to 1855, it is partly because he knows it best, but chiefly because that period was the one in which MacLeod's strength was gradually maturing, and in which he laid the foundations of most which he afterwards achieved. The story of his life in that quiet strath, sixteen miles south of Glasgow, is soon told. His first visit to the Sunday-school revolutionised it. His first sermon to children, on "How Christ dries tears," opened a new vein of pulpit oratory. His first course of week-night lectures, on the "Civil War and the Commonwealth," introduced the handloom weavers of Strathaven to a stirring period of English history, whilst the closing lecture of the series on the Poets of the Commonwealth, gave them their first taste of George Herbert. His first utterance on the temperance question struck a clear note, which was but the beginning of many a bugle call with which he made the whole parish afterwards ring. His first work amid the sick and the dying revealed a man of tender, gracious sympathies, which the lapse of years seemed only to touch to finer issues. His first Bible class set young hopefuls to writing essays. The first student boy in his congregation was the capture of an entire heart and intellect, that was but the earnest of many such in succeeding years and in other spheres of labour.

MacLeod was in sympathy with his entire congregation. His sermon at a public meeting of the congregation, on the evening of July 8th, 1846, to celebrate the Repeal of the Corn Laws, was a perfervid oration. The

whole service was unique. Two hymns were written for the occasion by MacLeod himself. The first stanza of the opening hymn struck the keynote of thanksgiving :

"Our thanks arise to Thee, O God,
Our hearts swell up with gladness ;
For Thou the cord of Death hast broke,
Which filled our land with sadness.
The counsel of unrighteousness
O'erthrown—no longer living ;
Our opened shores receive the bread
Their sister shores are giving.

If the singing of the first hymn was impressive, that of the concluding hymn was magnificent. An audience of over a thousand, touched to the heart by an impassioned discourse, rolled out stanza after stanza with glad accord, melting into tenderness as the last verse was reached :

"Thou whose life for man was given,
Be our lives Thy constant care,
Till, like birds by winter driven,
We shall flock to meet Thee where
Summer music
Floats for ever through the air."

MacLeod's rural pastorate was in many respects a model one. His manse occupied the upper part of a little plot, one side of which was bounded by a fresh streamlet. Here he spent many happy and laborious years. With temptations to be simply a preacher he was yet a most painstaking pastor. With plenty to do to meet the weekly requirements of the pulpit, he continued to keep some course of reading and study in hand for week-night lectures and magazine articles. He was in no haste to leave his first charge. For nearly twelve years

he was quietly maturing his strength without conscious reference to anything beyond his immediate sphere. The West Church pulpit was his "joy and throne." The scenery of Avondale made a deep impression on his vivid eye. The Book of Life around him, in the experience of his humble flock, was ever yielding him lessons of deep spiritual worth. Sketches which appear in the books he afterwards wrote, and which look like pictures of the imagination, are portraits drawn from real life. The author of this sketch could write the actual names under many of these photographs of Strathaven life, such as "The patience of Margaret Hope." The actual Margaret, with her unlovely face, her weak eyes covered by a green shade, her heart knowledge of the truth, the soul of poetry within her that kept rhythm to the sound of her pirn-wheel, is present to his mind's eye to-day. Her spiritual self lives in the sketch which appeared years after in "The Gentle Heart." He had an open eye and an open heart for the encouragement of all in whom he discerned the possibility of higher things. A budding poet in his congregation found in him a generous patron of his first volume of verses, that was followed by-and-bye by some of the very best temperance songs and lyrics of child life; whilst youths with aspirations toward higher learning in any direction were his special care.

The Strathaven study was the seed-plot of nearly all that afterwards grew into books. He had been struck with a note in Arnold's Thucydides, comparing the various periods in the growth of a nation to the successive stages in the life of an individual. This became a germ round

which his reading and thinking began to gather. It shaped itself into two separate sets of week-night lectures. By-and-bye it got licked into form for a weekly serial. Finally it appeared in a volume entitled "European Life." A 'cute American publisher pirated it in a splendidly illustrated edition after the author had appeared on an American platform at a Presbyterian Assembly. The closing chapter of the book on Thomas Carlyle won a grunt of approval from the sage of Chelsea himself. In the Moral Philosophy Class Dr. Fleming had called the attention of the students to Coleridge's suggestive hint, that Memory might be the dread book which is to be opened at the Day of Judgment. Here was another fructifying germ which developed into a magnificent sermon. The sermon became a series of sermons, which took shape finally in "Our Lives and the Books of Judgment." A year or two after he went to Glasgow he delivered a very admirable lecture on "Church building." A goodly number of architects put in an appearance, expecting something in their line. It ran, however, in different grooves, viz., the contribution which each Church and age have made to the ideal of a perfect Church. This thought had been long at work in his mind, for the seedling out of which it grew forms the prelude to one of his lectures on the "Civil War." During the sittings of the Social Science Congress in Glasgow, in 1860, he delivered a very telling discourse on Heaven's Social Science, founded on Luke iv. 18. It was his first endeavour to grapple with social problems. But the first endeavour drew out his interest in the theme, and appeared in its final form in "Christus Consolator."

The minister of the West Church, Strathaven, had now become widely known. A speech against the adoption of the Summary of Principles at the Synod held in Glasgow, brought him to the front, and marked him out as one to be reckoned with in Church Courts. More than one city charge was known to be anxious to secure him for the pastorate. In the midsummer of 1855 a call was addressed to him by John Street Church, Glasgow, to become the colleague of Dr. William Anderson. This call he accepted, and on the 11th of October was inducted into the charge. It was no easy matter to stand side by side with Dr. Anderson in the same pulpit each Sunday. The senior minister was a man of rare gifts, of great originality, and of ready oratory. But the gifts of the junior minister soon made room for him. Most men would have sunk to the position of a mere assistant, but MacLeod took his place and kept it. He found his audience and quickly attached it to him. His own gift was as distinctive as his colleague's, and it secured equal appreciation. Mainly through his energies a new and handsome church was built on the site of the old. Old societies in connection with the congregation were flushed into new life, and many new organisations were added. A coterie of students found in MacLeod's preaching stimulus and strength, among whom Tiyo Soga, the first native missionary to Kaffraria, was conspicuous. Young men and women were drawn out to church work. A new John Street was gradually growing up under the shade of the old. A ministry of freshness of sympathy, of width of view, and of spiritual power had begun, and went on

deepening during the eight and a half years of its continuance.

MacLeod was at his greatest as a preacher in John Street. He needed the kindling of a large audience. Whether in John Street, or in the City Hall during the building of the new church, Glasgow supplied this want. There was a pathos in his voice, a freshness in his style, a power of selecting some given point, of illustrating and following it up in practical application, a breadth of popular effect, and a way of getting at the heart and conscience, that told with magnetic effect on his audiences, and reacted on himself with accumulating power. There was perhaps no finer illustration of this than in the Presbyterian Assembly at Philadelphia, where he took captive his audience at the very outset of his address by his generous tribute to their own De Tocqueville, and held the thousands massed before him in riveted attention to the close. There was no height of reputation to which he might not have risen as a preacher in his Glasgow days, had he sacrificed everything to it; But he was a pastor as well as a preacher, a pastor first, a preacher next. The demands of a large congregation were sufficient to employ his whole time apart from pulpit work. In Glasgow, as in Strathaven, he was pre-eminently the pastor. Who will blame him if he sacrificed ambition on the altar of duty ?

As already indicated, the Glasgow pastorate was of the most wearing-out description. It was evident to his most intimate friends that it was levying a tax on his physical strength which it could not long pay.

Despite their heartfelt sorrow at the prospect of losing

him, his friends saw, in the call to Birkenhead in 1864, a gracious interposition delivering him from a stress and strain which every year were becoming greater. Those who were present in Greyfriars Church when he accepted the call, will remember the scene of poignant distress on the part of the minister tearing himself away from an attached flock. The severance from Glasgow was the "agony" period of his life. The writer was with him at this transition, and sat by his side in the beautiful little hall at Claughton, where, on the 17th March 1864, he was inducted to the charge of Trinity Church. As he sat there, MacLeod was parting from his old life, and, to a large extent, from his cherished ambitions. The fountains of the great deep within, were broken up. The tears would not remain at their source. It was a Gethsemane period through which he was passing. All unconsciously Dr. William Graham, who offered the induction prayer, took up the bleeding tissues as he prayed, that in every agony the strengthening angel would be near at hand. By-and-bye the tears ceased. The strengthening angel had come, and he went forth to face the future with its new work and new possibilities of good.

In a very short time the interest of the new position, and of the new environment, grew upon him. The little cause prospered. His Alma Mater conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. Trinity Church was built. An attached congregation gathered around him. A great commercial centre would doubtless have suited him better than a fashionable suburb. In Birkenhead, however, he did good work. From Birkenhead his influence

gradually made itself felt over the sister churches in England. Its quiet retreat afforded the leisure which enabled him to give to the world the books through which the sphere of his influence was so largely increased. He began his ministry at Birkenhead, as at Glasgow and Strathaven, from the text, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." For twenty-seven years in Birkenhead, that key-note kept vibrating through his public teaching. His work was to preach Christ—it was his joy as well as his work—Christ the Saviour, Christ the consoler, Christ the healer, Christ the inspiration and the life. A ministry which entrenched itself in this great central verity could look out with calmness on other and related truths. It might not settle questions of inspiration, but it held by an inspired Word. It might not formulate a theory of the Atonement, but it grasped the atoning death. It might not be dogmatic on questions which touch the fringe of revealed truth, but it was loyal to all that constitutes its life-blood. *There was a great deal of himself—his own life and experiences—in Dr. MacLeod's preaching.* Nor is there anything in this contradictory to what has just been said. For while he preached Christ, it was Christ as seen by his own eyes, apprehended by his own faith, felt and realised in his own experience. It was not the Christ he found in the confession, or in books of divinity, or accepted creeds. For him there was a more living Christ, and a richer book enshrining him—the Christ in the heart and life of His "hidden ones." These hidden ones he had rare ingenuity in finding out, and tender tact in gaining their confidence, and in appropriating their heart know-

ledge of divine things. It was this Christ—the living Christ of to-day, attesting His Divinity by a divine presence in humble hearts, certifying the reality of the Atonement by a joy that lit up dying eyes, and flooded dying hearts with peace—he loved to preach to his fellowmen.

There was a wonderful breadth about Dr. MacLeod's nature. He was open to light from whatever quarter it might come. His reading ranged over widely diversified fields. Newman's "Apologia" did not blunt his relish for M'Cheyne's "Memoirs." A note from Ewald gave stimulus equally with a homely spiritual utterance by Matthew Henry. His appreciation of Dr. Liddon never blinded him to the worth of Charles Spurgeon. Keble's hymns found in him a welcome ear, but he had a warm place in his heart for the "melodious" Scottish paraphrases. Ruskin, whose phrase has just been quoted, was one who interpreted for him the true, the beautiful, the good, but severer interpretations in a tract by Dr. Ryle did not receive the go-by. An unseen but tinkling rill by a roadside would fill his soul with its music, till the whole harmony disclosed itself in a discourse on Christ's "Hidden ones." A homely incident, such as losing his way by rail when making for a little town in Fife, became a parable of practical instruction in the "Parting of the Ways." A solitary clause in a text would furnish him with "ample room and verge enough" for the truth he saw there, and which no other eye had seen. His inability to see in a text what every other body saw, if at times a source of weakness, was to an average audience always a touch of freshness. The writer remembers a sermon in the church-

yard at Chapelton, two-and-a-half miles from Strathaven. For some reason the only place in which the sermon could be given was closed against the preacher. Nothing daunted, he found his way into the village graveyard, and there, from a kitchen chair as his pulpit, he delivered his sermon. The text was singularly appropriate—"The night cometh when no man can work." After an introductory sentence or two the preacher found his own line of illustration. Every period of life is a day with a distinct work to do, and to every such day a night comes when that work cannot be done. Mothers were exhorted about the brevity of their day in training their children for God, and entreated to work in it, for the night would come when it could not be done. Youths were told that this was their day for the sowing of pure thought and affection, and they must work now, else the night of worldly thought, of stunted affection, would darken around them. Then came the turn of the small boys who had been watching the oscillations of the chair in expectation of a collapse, which, however, did not come, and they were admonished that their day was one of obedience, of reverence, and of love. If these lessons were not learnt now they would never be learnt.

Dr MacLeod was a whole-hearted man, whole-hearted in his likes, whole-hearted in his dislikes. Once he was your friend he was your friend for ever, and there was no self-sacrifice too great to help in time of need. In a bookshop opposite the old College gate of Glasgow the writer one day, far back in the fifties, came across a beautifully bound two volumed edition of "Irving on Prophecy." A look at the fly-leaf showed several pen

and ink strokes which had been drawn across the name of the original owner of the book. A little closer inspection revealed the signature still unobliterated, "A MacLeod." This coincidence was narrated at next meeting, and then came the touching story which hung by it. A fellow-student of great parts, even of genius, had fallen into evil ways. This was followed by a trial for forgery before Lord Cockburn. His fellow-students resolved to secure counsel for the defence. MacLeod's empty purse could make no contribution. Some book must be sold to make up a subscription. Finally the best book was sacrificed—Irvin on Prophecy. The incident may be taken as typical of the warmth, the self-forgetting, self-sacrificing nature of his friendship. His "Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon" was scarcely ever at home. There was always some poor student turning up to whom it was cheerfully given in loan. Few hearts were more open—few hands more helpful. He was generous in his appreciation of the gifts of other men. He would look at a book on the side of its merits ere hastening to notice its demerits. He was a man of large tolerance. He was open-souled to all that was best and humanest in the time in which his lot was cast. He was true to all that touched the best interests of the common people among whom he loved to labour. He was loyal to old friendships. He was grandly simple in his tastes. There was a heartiness in his laughter that better than words bespoke the genuineness of his heart. There was a patriarchal beauty about his home-life which made one at rest under his roof. It was an inestimable privilege to have him as your guest; it was still more delightful to be his guest.

There are tents around the doors of which the angels delight to linger.

There are fair villages on our sea coasts that never show so fair as just when the full tide lips the brim of cottage gardens. The impression is different when the tide is low and a scraggy beach discloses unpleasant sights. What a contrast to this our Mediterranean seaboard cities, where the tideless waters keep touching the same point and present the same scene of beauty. The impression left by Dr. MacLeod's life on the writer was like that. Other men there were in regard to whom the receding waters left much, which one would rather not have seen. In his case there was no shrinkage of the waters, no painful disclosures of the mean or the unworthy. The ideal of childhood, he stood the tear and wear of the real in after life. Nearer approximation only showed one more worthy to be loved. Even the small failings which the nearer view disclosed seemed to constitute a new claim to deeper love, as when some outbreak of hasty judgment would be succeeded by a passionate outburst of tears. There was nothing in his "make" of the astute ecclesiastic. He had an impatience of forms, knew little about the rules of debate, and when in the chair of a Church Court was no hand at settling a point of order. It was only when some weightier matter emerged—some question of principle, some suspicion of unfairness towards an unfortunate "brother," some knuckling down to a modern Diotrephes—that he would throw himself into the fray with Celtic impetuosity. He was true to his Church, but denominationalism sat lightly on his shoulders. In his first charge he went to

hear Dr. Morrison preach in the little Evangelical Union Chapel, and even gave his church for the ordination services of one of their ministers. In Birkenhead some of his dearest friends and warmest admirers were outside his own denomination. Alive to all that was best in the leaders of thought in the Church of England, there was nothing for it but sorrowfully to recognise the fact that the barriers which separated were insuperable. But in the case of Congregational brethren, no one fretted more sorely at the small wickerwork that was permitted to divide him, even ecclesiastically, from such men as Dr. Dale and Principal Fairbairn.

Any sketch of Dr. MacLeod's life would be imperfect which omitted some reference to his books. It has been stated already he had the temerity as a student to print his prize poem, "The Age of Chivalry," the opening stanza of which comes back fresh to memory after many years—

> "The moonbeams fell on Caledon,
> On mountain, lake, and stream,
> As a bard sat wooing all alone
> The Muse of youthful dream."

Cast very much in the Sir Walter Scott model, at a period when public taste was setting toward the Lake School, it was a birth out of due time, and yet for a prize poem it was a work of no inconsiderable merit. His second volume was "European Life," which he issued in 1863, with the too humble sub-title, "Readings in Western Civilisation." The book, he tells us in the preface, is the first half of a series of lectures on Western Civilisation. The second half was never printed. The

next volume was published in 1865, "The Judgment Books," or, as it was amended in the second edition, "Our Lives and the Books of Judgment." In 1870 "Christus Consolator" appeared, in which we have one of the earlier attempts to set forth the relation of the pulpit to social problems. Although a quarter of a century has greatly altered the position of matters, capital pioneer work was done by this little volume. In 1872, the first of his three Books for the Young appeared. "Talking to the Children" was followed by "The Gentle Heart" in 1881, and that again by "The Children's Portion" in 1884. The first of these books embodied most of his early addresses to children, and has always seemed to the writer the very best. But the whole series was immensely popular, and made their author widely known—not quite to his liking—as the Prince of Preachers to Children. Few will dispute that in the hands of Dr. MacLeod preaching to children rose to the dignity of an art. In 1878, "Days of Heaven upon Earth" appeared. It contains a selection of sermons, each one of which has its own little history. "Righteous Judgment" is a survival of days when he was a "Probationer," "Experiences in a Sick Bed" grew out of an attack of typhoid fever in October 1851; "Christ Greater than the Church" was the sermon preached at the opening of the new John Street Church.

Dr. MacLeod's life at Birkenhead was a busy and useful one. His friends were always welcome at his home. New friends, especially among young ministers of his Church, were constantly gathering around him. His sympathies with students arose from his having

never ceased to be himself a student, and so younger ministers found in him a common centre of attraction. One form of his activity all through his career must not be omitted, viz., his letter-writing. None but survivors in his old home know how much of his time was spent in writing those marvellously compacted pages that went to form an ordinary communication. Only those who received them know how much of sympathy, of ripened thought, of playful humour, he could put into a letter. His letters to friends under the shadow of bereavement, could they be collected, would be worthy to stand side by side with Jameson's. His ordinary letters, could they see the light, would be found full of vivid sketches of the history of the period. It is hardly an exaggeration to say, that great as MacLeod was as a preacher and author, he was still greater as a letter writer. Touches of originality characterised the briefest note. The diamond handwriting was but the sign of something altogether unique.

Dr. MacLeod's name became one of weight in the Presbyterian Church of England. In 1870, along with Dr. Edmond of London, he was sent to represent his Church at the first Assembly at Philadelphia, when the two divided streams of presbyterian life in America flowed into one. The highest honour which his Church could bestow on him came in 1889, when he was called unanimously to the Moderator's chair. For his opening speech in the meeting of Synod in Regent Square Church, London, he took for his theme, "The Reformation." All through the year succeeding he was busily employed with the duties devolving on the Moderator, such as opening new

churches and preaching anniversary sermons. On April 28th, 1890, he preached the sermon as retiring Moderator in St. George's Presbyterian Church, Liverpool, at the opening of the Synod. His year's work as Moderator had made him more widely known over his own Church. His gifts made room for him, in a very marked way, in the reception of his inaugural discourse on the text —"A man's gift maketh room for him." Ere another Synod sat, room was found for him in the "general assembly and church of the first-born."

Little falls to be added in regard to the last days. If there was a shadow of Gethsemane at the close, as there had been at the beginning, of his English ministry, there was the same experience of the strengthening angel. Towards the close of 1890 strength failed him; with the opening of 1891 any little gleams of reviving hope died away. There was something very human about those very last days. His conversation with Mrs. MacLeod ranged over the early years of their acquaintance; and when he did look the future in the face, it was only to make some little arrangements—all else had been settled long ago. He was to be buried in his plaid. One who had been a boy in his first Sunday-school was to conduct one of the services when all was over. Another, his neighbour minister in whom his soul trusted, was to conduct the other service. Everything thus arranged, he awaited the end. It came on the 13th of January 1891.

ANDREW G. FLEMING.

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

By PRINCIPAL FAIRBAIRN.

It is with a feeling of grateful obligation that I respond to Mrs. MacLeod's invitation to write a prefatory note to this memorial volume.

Dr. Alexander MacLeod was one of the most loving and lovable of men, and all who knew him will rejoice that while dead he yet speaketh. He had in him a rich poetic vein, and at his touch the most familiar truths ceased to be commonplace, and assumed forms that made them appear anew to heart and imagination. He was a man of liberal culture and wide intellectual sympathies, who loved literature in all its forms, watched with keenest interest the living literary spirit, and faced its problems with the happy courage of one who wished to learn that he might be able to teach. Religion appeared to him more on its spiritual and imaginative than on its rational and theological side, and he looked at it as he looked at life, with an eye that had seen the poet's dream. He loved to see a new name emerge in literature, and over every fresh mind which came with some new message to the age, he rejoiced as over some express gift of God. And he had the contagious enthusiasm that infected where it touched, and he was never so

happy as when introducing some one of his many favourites to his friends. His nature was large, yet singularly true, generous, and unworldly to a fault, loyal alike to persons and principles, though he most loved a principle when it was so embodied in a person as to promote the sweetness and dignity and harmony of life.

My own intercourse with him was of a kind at once attractive and interesting. His was my mother-church, and in our home the distinguished ministers who served her were ever reverently named and remembered. So when as a theological student I went to Glasgow, one of the first ways taken was to Dr. William Anderson's church, for who could resist the opportunity of hearing the old man eloquent, whose rare and striking originality made some of his sermons household words, and whose still rarer courage in word and act made him the most impressive and romantic figure in the United Presbyterian pulpit of his day? But we were disappointed—the old man did not preach, his colleague did; yet not so much disappointed as surprised, to discover that the junior minister was no unworthy colleague to the senior, that he could speak as straightly as William Anderson himself, yet with an elevation, a literary grace, and a spiritual passion all his own. On two other occasions I heard him speak before I personally knew him. One was in the Synod Hall at Edinburgh, when he pleaded for Union with the Free Church, and he did it by using a figure from Isaac Taylor, that a man might do with a minor principle what a builder sometimes did with a cottage—so planted it as to mar a whole landscape, or as to hide from the spectator the most beautiful

feature of the scene. The second occasion was at a great meeting in Edinburgh, where he spoke of the dignity and the difficulties of the minister; and I shall never forget the climax of his speech, where he described the man in his study engaged in making a sermon which shall uplift and console his people, while at the very same moment he has to strain every muscle to hold the ravening wolf from the door. I did not know then what I came to know later, how much personal history had thus burst into speech; but his was too fine and too noble a nature to be soured by cares or embittered by experience. His soul like his home remained ever sweet and radiant, and the hardness of the earlier years only ripened and enriched the fruit which was so abundantly borne in the later.

The beginning of our friendship was characteristic. My first book—a series of "Studies in the Philosophy of Religion and History"—had shortly before been published, and a Scotch Chair of Philosophy for which I had been a candidate had gone to another, an event, which, situated as I then was, seemed like the closing of the door of hope. Dr. MacLeod was then visiting in the North of Scotland, and he came to Aberdeen, sought me out, told me generous things he had heard spoken of my little book by more than one scholar of eminence, and variously made me feel that there was a wider world where the obscure worker in a small one was not altogether unknown. The prophecy he then indulged in proved no form of vain words; the call to a wider sphere soon came, and as it brought us nearer to each other our intercourse soon became intimate, and I may say affec-

tionate on both sides, fatherly on his, filial on mine. And if ever a word was spoken or a thing written which gave him occasion to write, a letter was sure to come, no short perfunctory matter of course compliment, but a letter whose careful words showed that the heart had prompted the head, and would not let it write without saying something of service to the man who received it.

These personal reminiscences would be intolerable were they not so characteristic of him in whose memory they are written. This is but a typical case—what he was to me, he was to many. He was a man that men in need of counsel and comfort loved to seek and instinctively found. The distressed brother was ever certain of a sympathetic hearing and the best advice which genuine brotherliness could give. And he had the invaluable faculty of helping the man whose cares tempted him to look earthward, to lift his eyes so as to see higher and greater things. The same faculty made him the efficient and tender pastor he was; he carried the souls of his people within his own, though at a price of suffering his people never knew, and it made him the exquisite preacher to children he became. The rare art of speaking to the young he had by nature, but he made nature perfect by diligent cultivation. His was indeed a beautiful spirit, and of him as he was even his own words can give but the faintest image. But as he was he lives in the memories of those who loved him, and those words of his may help to keep green and vivid a name they would not willingly let die.

A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

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A MAN'S GIFT

*THE POWER OF GIFTS**

"A man's gift maketh room for him."—PROV. xviii. 16.
"To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge."—1 COR. xii. 8.

"A MAN'S gift maketh room for him." It is an experience as old as the race, that this power resides in gifts.

The bracelets and earrings of gold with which Eliezer decked Rebekah at the well, made room for his young master in the maiden's family, and also in the heart of the maiden herself.

The flocks and herds which Jacob sent forward at the brook Jabbok made room for him in the affections of the brother whom years before he had wronged.

And the wise men of the East made a place for themselves, in which they dwell to this day in the esteem of the Christian household, by the treasures of gold and frankincense and myrrh which they presented to the Babe in Bethlehem centuries ago.

But the gifts which, in this way, make room are more than treasures of gold and frankincense, or flocks and

* The Moderator's Sermon at the opening of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of England, April 28, 1890.

herds. These are but the outside, the visible embodiment of the gifts. The gift itself is ever an inner thing. It is the industry which gathered the gift, or the love expressed by it, or the faith and adoration it brings into view.

Always it is some inner quality—some worth or grace in the possessor of the gift: his faith, truth, gentleness, or courage, or whatever else marks him out and sets him apart among men.

It was Joseph's loyalty to God's laws of honour and purity, and his administrative faculty, which cleared for him that space he filled in the affairs of Egypt, and to this day occupies in the history of the Hebrew race.

It was the regal genius of David which opened up for him a path, and at last made room for him on the throne, and in the history of a nation which knew him at the outset only as a shepherd boy.

The gift of a man, therefore, is no mere outside possession, no endowment, circumstance, or destiny apart from the man, but the very man, and the best of the man. And it is this best of the man that makes room.

It is but a step further, and we are in the presence of the highest gifts which a man can have, the gifts which come to him by the descent and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and which are not only the best of the man in him who possesses them, but the best of the best of men, for they are gifts of the Christian man.

Up to the intrinsic worth and scope of such gifts their power is irresistible. They will remove obstruction, subdue opposition, overturn kingdoms; but in the end they will have created a sphere in which their possessors

shall be supreme. Years may have to pass, but their power works on. On the one hand, through all those years, advancing along their appointed paths, shall be found the gifts: on the other, deep hidden in the future, long waited for, but at last surely, shall be found the room.

It is an operation so universal and constant as to have the force of a law. It is, in fact, a law. In this way God works for the extension of His cause in the world. He bestows a gift. The gift makes room, and there the possessor of the gift becomes an influence, a power, for righteousness and God.

II.

The most wonderful exhibition of this power was at the beginning of the Church. One of the most prominent and pervasive facts of the time was this influence of gifts. All through that time they had recognised place and power. Conversion, edification, extension of the Church followed their descent and exercise.

What comes first into view in the records of that time is a cluster of gifts peculiar to the time—gifts of apostleship, of healing, of tongues, of interpretation of tongues—gifts special, official, miraculous.

But the gifts of that time were not limited to these. Beyond these lay the boundless, manifold, ever-expanding field of the ordinary and abiding gifts of Christian life.

Paul is including ordinary gifts where he says, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our

ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

Everything that could advance the new cause was looked upon as a gift: function of Church office, mental equipment, grace of character, power of service. Pentecost was the baptism, the quickening, the stirring up, the bringing into new activity, for new Divine ends, of the powers, capacities, sensibilities, emotions of the Christian man, in the great purpose of bringing the world to Christ. Every gift made room.

It was a time of miracle. But far more, it was a time quick with the operation which repeats itself in every revival of God's life among men—the natural action and influence of new contact between man's spirit and God's, of new insight into His love, and of new displays of His grace—the ever-recurring miracle which descends in times of refreshment from the Divine presence, when the story of God's love is set in fairer colours, and God Himself revealed in new, fuller, and nearer vision, and those to whom the gifts come are set with their faces towards the wilderness to go in and possess it for God.

There could hardly be imagined a world more hostile than that which surrounded the little handful of believers who, in those first years of the Church, received the Holy Ghost, and became by that boon the first instruments and pioneers of His advance.

Far and near the world was filled with forces opposed to theirs. Far and near human life was conducted, and human society organised, on principles at total variance

with those in which their life had its roots. Yet to conquer that world for Christ, and to change its life into the life of Christ, the Spirit of God simply touched the springs of personal power and grace in His people, simply evolved the hidden and unsuspected forces which lay as germs in the new life, and transfiguring these by His own indwelling, sent them in so equipped to make room.

III.

Let us take one of those gift-bearers apart, and watch the action of His gift upon the world. Let it be one of the young men who accompanied the Saviour during His public life, and saw Him after His resurrection. His gift was the apostolic testimony, the Gospel of the risen Christ. He knew that Christ who died was alive again. Heaven and earth were not more real to his outward vision than Christ's resurrection to the vision of his memory and his faith. He lived, he moved, he had his being in a new light, in a new relationship to the Lord. As he set forth to declare his testimony, he had neither human authority nor support of human institution, nor staff nor scrip. He had nothing but this inner possession, this knowledge that Christ was risen from the dead. He was sent forth by God to tell this story of risen life to men. He was the Apostle of the new time.

Every nook, every height, every foot of standing ground were filled with people who disbelieved his tale.

"Who is this new-comer," they said, "that he should utter his babble to us, or set forth his strange gods?"

The young Apostle was rudely repelled. He was treated as a troubler, sometimes as a disturber of peace; and the years passed on, and the grey came into his hair. But, none the less, all the while, the gift of the man, the vision he had seen, the force of the knowledge he carried, his testimony concerning the risen Christ, was overcoming obstruction, dispelling prejudice, and making room. Wherever he came, he declared his message; and the fresh words went forth, went out through all the towns he visited, went down like dawn among the fogs and mists of unbelief, and passed conquering and regnant into the hearts of men. The new thoughts, the beautiful new words, the gladsome hopes which radiated from the fact of the Lord's resurrection, became part of the heritage of the race, and made richer the whole life of man. And while the blind and the deaf in that hard pagan world were still locking their gates against the intrusion of the new teacher, his ideas were being sung in their fields and his words were light in the dwellings of their slaves. While they were vainly trying to shut him out from the world he was sent to bless, his gift was creating a new region of thought and feeling in that very world from which, even if he were to die, he should still continue to speak of resurrection and God.

In that way spread belief in the resurrection. Men who had seen the risen Lord, and by-and-by, men who believed the testimony of those who had seen Him, went forth and poured their faith into other hearts. Their gift made room: it penetrated into the waste places of human thought and feeling, where despair fed on pastures of death. It drove out the despair, and made the places

beautiful with light from heaven. It advanced into realms filled with superstition and fear, and reclaimed whole provinces and wide-reaching regions of spiritual life for the Lord. The testimony made room in men's thoughts, visions, hopes, aims, customs and laws. It took possession of the human heart; and it filled it with new ideas and hopes, and new conceptions of the universe and God.

IV.

In the same way, and to the same end, worked that other gift of the new life—that charity which is greater than tongues, or interpretations, or knowledge, or prophecy.

So far as human eyes could detect, there seemed no door for the entrance of this grace into the life of the world. The world did not know the very idea of charity. Yet the grace had entrance, and spread and made its presence felt. It found its way into the remotest provinces of the world. It rooted itself by ever so slender fibres to the life which, in spiritual things, was such a dark tangle in the cities of the Roman Empire. It took possession of thousands and tens of thousands of human hearts. At last it became a force, working from innumerable centres, and filling the world with its blessed ministries. The dismal forests, the slave-worked farms of the great nobles, the mines, the back streets and slums of cities, like Rome and Corinth, the barracks in which soldiers sat chained to the prisoners of Christ—all felt the power of this grace in Christian life, and were touched by its gentle light.

And in all this there was nothing that may not happen among ourselves. It was the inevitable effect of a Divine gift in human character—the simple growth and expansion of its influence, until it cleared a space for its possessors in the surrounding life.

A poor orphan arrived one raw midwinter at a homestead where she was not wanted. She was a disowned brother's or sister's child. She brought nothing in her hands to win a place for herself among those cold hearts. There was only herself. It was barely civil the welcome she received. No love lightened the hard and stony smile which flickered for only a minute on the faces of the family as she entered. There was no room for her in this inn. Her arrival was the arrival of hateful memories and of an unwelcome burden.

But at the end of a few brief years, what new influence was it which pervaded that home? What new, strange, subtle tie bound soul to soul? What power drew every eye with a kindly glance to the stranger? Why was there now a felt blank when she was absent? When she has been from home for a few days, why were they all clustering about the door to welcome her on her return?

It was the gift she brought which made room for her. She brought love into that loveless home. And her love had taken possession of it and brightened it, and cleared out for its possessor a love-filled chamber in every heart in that home.

And just that way came into the world, and just that way worked the gift of Christian charity. It descended quietly and without welcome into the world. It took

possession of outcast women, of crushed slaves, of toiling peasants. It made room in the hearts of human beings, both for itself and its possessors. It became a Divine force in human hearts, a power of God unto salvation, an eternal possession for the race, pushing its victories in all directions, and knocking at every gate of entrance on the earth.

We do not see this wonder as we might, because we look past its present triumphs to those of the first years of our religion. But what we see when we look to those years is only the first descent and excitement of the jubilant new life—only the first outbursting of the river which was to make glad the city of God. The wonder remained when the excitements of its first appearance were a mere memory of the past. Only now it began to show itself in processes that were normal, quiet, and gradual, like the coming of spring. It is the natural influence of Christian gifts; the gentle, slow, but unresting breaking out of new thoughts, new hopes, new affections, over wide domains of human life, until those who dwell there, looking around, find themselves unexpectedly in a new world, and hear voices saying, "The kingdom of heaven is come."

V.

The centuries which followed the days of the Apostles are filled with illustrations of this same power of gifts. The saintly lives of the Middle Ages, the songs and hymns of their poets, the doctrines wrought in the fires of debate in their councils, the architecture of their

cathedrals—there was the working of this power in them all. But I shall not attempt to illustrate these. The subject opens out on another side.

Gifts are not only powers working for God, they are powers fitted for the time. A need arises: a gift to meet that need is sent. The day darkens: light begins to shine. It is the gracious God providing for the needs of the time.

Transfer your thoughts from the age of the Apostles to our own. Fix them on the generation to which ourselves belong. Recall the thoughts which people in this country were thinking, and the lives they were leading, thirty or forty years ago. Recall the trials, perilous to their spiritual wellbeing, on which, at that period, they were entering.

And see, in connection with these trials, the counteracting gifts which God in His goodness sent. It is only one or two out of the multitude of these gifts which I can refer to; and I do not give them as the greatest that can be named, but as those with which I myself am most familiar. The first of these is a gift of song.

You all know what one great spiritual trial of our time has been. You all know that new vision of creation, that widening of the material universe by scientific research, and, issuing from that, those strange uneasy questionings that overleaped their legitimate bounds, and reaching far beyond the discoveries, became questionings of the foundation on which our faith was resting. The gift of God to our generation was, that all down the years of this unsettling movement, we had Tennyson and Browning singing their songs of faith, giving us new

forms in which to express the old truths, and lifting our imaginations to a higher plane than that on which the discoveries of science were worked out. The ideas with which Tennyson helped to elevate the thought of our time were the order, the progress, the Divine government of the world. The special blessing in his poetry was, that it reflected, while it was not subdued, by the science of the time. He beheld the new horizons which it was opening up, and even rejoiced in them; but there was none in which he failed to see the dwelling-place of God. He saw nature "red in tooth and claw," but more clearly the pathos and glory of our human life as set in God. He heard our human cry to God. He recognised the weakness and limitation of it: the crying of an infant in the night, and with no language but a cry; but ever, above all, he saw the possibility of emergence from the weakness, the unresting advance of the individual type towards perfection, and the eternal progression of our race in God—

> "And one far-off Divine event
> To which the whole creation moves."

The same blessing was in Browning's poetry, but in a more pronounced form. His songs are songs of the soul—of its possibilities, its triumphs, its failures, its salvation, its immortality. When he tells a story of shame, or the neglect and misuse of talents, he makes you feel that it is the soul that suffers. When he tells of moral triumph, it is the soul that triumphs. He finds glimpses of soul-life in the most trivial and in the lost. He hears the soul voicing itself under the rags of lost chances and

reputations. He looks into the eyes of souls that outwardly seem poor and feeble, but which, at some one supreme moment, flashed out greatness in insight, in feeling, or in achievement. He arrests attention on that. That is a revelation, he will tell you, of what is Divine and eternal in those souls. 'Tis but a flash here, a gleam on a dark tide; but it is also a foregleam of a higher life. It will be an abiding splendour in heaven by-and-by. Or he looks into the life of some great soul, rich in art or faith, but unknown to fame. He listens to him as he builds a glorious temple of music in the organ-loft of an empty church. Nobody is interested in him; nobody is listening to him. The poet raises a question: Is it all in vain? Is the end of the man's faculty in this uncared-for burst of music? No. The music, the life's work of the man, is not lost. It goes up to God.

> "The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
> The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
> Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard.
> Enough that He heard it once; we shall hear it by-and-by."

We have only to throw ourselves back into the life of the universities and imagine the successive generations of young souls coming up to be prepared for their future tasks, caught on the one side by the troubled murmur of doubt and unsettlement of old beliefs, and on the other with the reassurance, the steadying, the expansion, the lifting up of the songs of those two men; hearing in the great "In Memoriam" of the one a foresong of the resurrection, and in his "Idylls" the Christian ideal of life; and in the strong words of the other, an undying

assertion of the greatness and importance of the soul—to realise the benefit which God wrought for our age when He sent us those poets with their gift of song.

Many a man is speaking bravely for God in the pulpits of our country to-day, who would not have been there but for those two poets. And no memory of their lives is more gratefully recalled than the days of the university, when, in long conferences in their rooms, or happy walks into the country, they and their fellow-students used to recite the favourite passages of the poems, which were helping at the time, and have helped ever since, to stay up their hearts on God.

VI.

A blessing as great and as richly fitted to the needs of the time was wrought by the gift I am next to name. Forty years ago there was a self-containedness, an unsympathetic hardness, a lack of generous ardours in the general life of our country. As a rule, people were looking at their own interests and not at the interests of others. And there was coming on them almost the greatest trial that can befall a people—a sudden and widespread increase of wealth, and a change in thousands of homes from industrious striving and narrow means to an affluence which brought idleness and luxury in its lap.

There is nothing which more vividly witnesses to the Divine presence, and nothing in itself more beautiful and more like Himself, than the gift of sympathy for human misery with which God endowed some Christian ladies to meet that state of things.

We have only to recall what the hospitals for the sick were forty years ago, and the character of the nursing, and the hideous life in our poorhouses, and the condition of the children of the poorest, and the lives led by young women who had lost their way, and we shall be able to estimate the greatness of the work to which these ladies set their hearts and hands.

I go back to the Crimean War, and I find *Florence Nightingale* carrying the tenderness of her heart, and her gentle womanly touch, and her unsurpassed faculty of order, to the wounded soldiers. I come down a few years, and I see her friend *Agnes Jones* bringing her delicate culture, her practical training, her Christian patience and charity, into the poorhouse of this very city, to sweeten and hallow the life of the lorn and belated there. I come some years further still, and I see *Sister Dora* at Walsall, gathering within the shelter of her sympathy and care poor men shattered by railway collisions, or scorched by explosions of molten iron, and making an earthly heaven for them in their suffering by her tender care. At one awful crisis I see her shutting herself up in a pest-house—which no other but the doctor would go near—and, all but alone, ministering to the sufferers there. And after this I am in the presence of the greatest of the four, *Josephine Butler*, laying her white charity over the lost sisters of the street, and wooing them in the name of Christ to a better life: and grander still, in the interest of these lost ones, leaving her home to fulfil a task of unspeakable difficulty, to denounce a law that legalised vice, and in the face of coarse and brutal taunts—not always from men alone—

to hold that law up to obloquy, till she compelled the world to listen and Parliament to abolish the shame.

Christian work in England has been changed by the lives and deeds of those four ladies. Doors of homes rich in culture and means are opening daily now, and fair daughters stepping forth, leaving ease and luxury, and going forth on ministries of nursing and rescue. A consciousness, such as never before existed in our social life, is reminding us that we are our brother's keeper. The great conviction is working in many hearts that we are debtors to the poor, and the heavy laden, and them that are out of the way. The best lives of our best classes are pervaded by humane sympathies. Kindly hands take hold of homeless children on the streets, and lead them through doorways of virtuous and useful life. Criminals—who have no friends on earth—are met at the prison gate when their terms of punishment are ended, and entered on chances of new careers. A new enlightened interest clusters around the suffering poor. Workmen caught in machinery, navvies crushed under cruel wheels, shipbuilders falling from the scaffolding, poor mothers carrying new life under their heart but without beds to lie on, poor children who have fallen into the fire—they are cared for, they are visited in the hospitals daily. The visitors bring flowers to brighten the sad hours of the sufferers, and in their cheerful sympathy the fragrance of a summer better than flowers can show.

Many a time, in my study, I pause over my work to refresh my heart with the vision of these fair and saintly visitors going forth on their gracious ministries. I see

them leaving their warm homes on winter days, faring forth through rain or snow, entering unattractive buildings, putting all signs of winter weather aside, clothing themselves with a holy brightness, with sisterly concern for the suffering, passing from bed to bed, dropping tender words of sympathy, repeating a verse of the Bible, and sometimes, like angels of the Divine presence, sitting by the bedside and singing hymns or cheerful songs to the weary sufferers. What a boon such a service is to those visited! Life in most of these sufferers has lost its old cravings and ambitions. A cup of cold water, the fragrance of a flower, the touch of a human hand, the tender look of a sympathetic eye, the kind word—these are better to them now than gold or silver, than success or fame. And these are the boons of heaven which those Sisters of Mercy bring to them.

VII.

Among the gifts of our generation there is none which has had a greater blessing attached to it than the one I am next to name. It is a gift of sacrifice.

We have seen Sisters of Mercy going forth, clad in the mercy of Christ, to reclaim the lost and to alleviate the sorrow and mitigate the pain of suffering. The gift-bearer I am next to name has his work among the sources where lostness and misery have their rise.

At the time I began my ministry, there was a state of public opinion in relation to intemperance which must fill with amazement all who hear of it to-day. The habit of taking strong drink was fashionable. It per-

vaded the life, the trade, the joys, the sorrows of society. There was drinking at the birth of children, and drinking at the burial of their parents. The young lad entering his apprenticeship had to celebrate the occasion by a treat of drink. He had to give another when he became a journeyman. Bargains were sealed with drink. Ministers visiting their people were expected to drink. If they went out to a private baptism it was their function to mix the drink. And the songs which were sung at social gatherings were, as often as otherwise, in praise of drink.

When the instincts of Christian life in the community began to rise against this state of things, it was by the action of some poor men and women—factory workers in a Lancashire village—that the first effective step was taken. They passed a resolution that, for themselves and all they could influence, they would sacrifice the liberty to drink. And this was the humble beginning of the blessed gift of abstinence.

When the abstainers announced their resolution, they were received with derision. The reproaches of the religious public were especially bitter. They were called despisers of the good creatures of God, followers of John the Baptist rather than Christ, and people who made themselves better than Christ Himself, who made wine for His guests at the marriage in Cana of Galilee.

Years passed before they discovered the true footing and defence of their practice in the Word of God. But at last they found it. I will tell you where the ground was found, and also how it was found, by telling the

story of one who found it for himself long after it had been found by his humbler brethren. It is the story of one of the most distinguished ministers of the Gospel in a sister Church.

For years he had taken up the position that Christ came eating and drinking, and it was therefore Christian rather than otherwise to follow the Master in this. He took his stand on the undoubted lawfulness of using wine. "I am content," he said, "to be like my Lord. I follow my Lord. He made wine at Cana of Galilee. I take that as the sanction for my taking wine." And so for years —and long years—he sat at dinner-tables where wine was used, and drank it at his own.

But one day he was sent for to visit a house to which he had often repaired, at whose table he had often sat and drank of the wine. The master of the house was a ruin. Drink had ruined him. Horror took hold of my friend. "Have I sat at that man's table," he said to himself, "and given him the example of my wine-drinking?" In a moment he saw the whole business of wine-drinking in another light. One night his heart was broken, for the Lord Jesus Christ came to him and said, "*Dost thou profess to be My servant?*" Yes, my Lord. "*Art thou My follower?*" My Lord, I trust so. "*How far dost thou follow Me? Is it only to Cana of Galilee? If I had tarried at Cana of Galilee, what benefit should I have wrought to thee?*" That night the Lord took His servant to Calvary, and gave him a vision of the Cross, and from that Cross the eyes of the Lord, from under the crown of thorns, pierced him through and through; and the words sank into his heart, never more to be effaced:

"*He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our life for the brethren.*" In that hour the real ground out of which abstinence came was disclosed to him. In that hour he said to himself, "If my Lord laid down His life for me, it is a small thing that I should lay down this little bit of my life—this liberty to take wine—for my brethren."

The work wrought by this humble gift has its record in heaven. Even on earth it has achieved a position of immense influence. It is now a consecration of Christian life, a sacred mission for the prevention of ruin of souls. It has changed the opinion of the world. It has made the drinking of strong drink unfashionable; and it has, by the beneficent example of those who practise it, saved many a home from misery, and prevented many a life from going down to a shameful grave.

VIII.

But now, fathers and brethren, passing from these illustrations of the power of gifts in our social life, I ask you to bear with me for a very little longer, while I speak to you in a more personal strain of the gift which stands in the forefront of all others that can be named, the gift for which, in a sense, this Synod meets, for the stirring up and perfecting of which our college exists—the great, the permanent gift of the preacher.

Other gifts wait on the exercise of this. But for this gift, and the faithful exercise of it in the last generation, there would have been no poet's song with Christ at the heart of it, and no Sister of Mercy clad with

the pity of Christ, and no abstinence movement. Oh, brethren in the ministry; oh! my younger brethren especially, to whom in the privilege of my years I may speak as sons, have you laid to heart the transcendent glory and power of the gift with which God has endowed us for our task? It is more than university training, more than scholarship, more than genius itself. It is Christ. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." By the same method He has ordained for us, He works Himself. He makes room by His gift. And Christ is that gift. And that is our gift—our power—our equipment for our task, dear brethren. We not only speak for God; we speak in the power of this gift, this Divine treasure, in our heart. A man's gift makes room for him. Christ is the gift with which we are to make room—Christ in us, the gift, the power of God unto the salvation of those we address. With this we knock at the door of the human heart. With this we appeal to the souls of the lost. With this we stir up and evoke the dormant gifts in the members of the Church. Our gift makes room. It is room for God we make; room in the thoughts of men; room in the life of their homes; room in their relations with each other; room where the toiling masses win their bread in the sweat of their brow, and where merchants buy and sell on the exchange; room in the aims and ideals of life, and in the arts and literature and politics of the time, and in religious life itself.

We are standing on the edge of a great new time. Tides of change are sweeping in upon our thoughts and relationships and ways of looking upon things. The

democratic movement, which has been gathering strength and volume in far sundered channels for many generations, is now a united and mighty flood. And on its surface can be seen strange forms of life, and over it are sounding voices, which are as yet strange to our ears. But stand you, to whom God has given the preacher's task, at your watch-towers in the pulpit. Let no one tempt you to forsake your task, and go out into the region of affairs and speculative schemes. Shut your ears to the impatient cries which call on you to come forth for the settlement of this debate or of that in either workfield or politics. Leave such tasks to experts. Be you experts in the Gospel. The eternal principles of social life are there; and the one perennial fountain of such principles is the Cross of Him who laid down His life for His brethren.

I know—I have felt—the thought which is stirring in some of you as I speak. You are thinking that you are shut out from the high places where great results can follow the exercise of your gift. You are shut in and secluded among lonely villages, and back streets in town, where you are alone in your work. But stir up the gift within you none the less. You never know where God shall put the open hearts which shall be touched by His truth. The readers of the synagogue of Nazareth, when they were reciting Isaiah, did not know a little boy was listening who would one day make the passage they had read aflame with the light of heaven. Stir up your gift. God-chosen workers for the future are sown in every village—in every back street. You are making room for the thought of God in hearts

which make no sign, but which may carry the words in which you expound those thoughts to new worlds. From this island is pouring out at present a flood of human life to all the ends of the earth. Fling forth your glad tidings. Send them forth, hot with the love of God—hot with the love of souls. Send them forth in faith. Do not fear but God will find a place for all words concerning Him faithfully spoken. The greater your thought, the nobler your conception of truth, the greater will be the effect. Like a living thing, it leaves your lips never more to rest, except on human hearts. Like Christ's own words, which are flying through the heavens to this day, dropping their benediction on the hearts of men, the words of His faithful servants fly. They live. They work. They take root for God thousands of miles from the humble sphere where they were spoken. They bring forth fruit for God. And, although you may not have the joy here, in the eternal world you will discover that you have not lived in vain.

And for the rest, beloved brethren, both ministers and elders, let us be very earnest in the cultivation and exaltation of this central gift. Bring it well forward among the purposes of our Church's life. We are but a little Church, it is true, in this great England; but without arrogance, or stretching ourselves beyond the measure of our capacity, our Church may become the mother of a race of preachers who shall not need to be ashamed in their work.

CHRIST THE POWER OF GOD

1 Cor. i. 24.

Among the many rich facts laid bare to us by the scientific research of our time, none has impressed people more, or more widely opened a view of new possibilities, than the power or force which has been shown to reside in almost everything around us.

The air we breathe, the water we drink, the light we see by, the ground we tread, the stones we hew out of the rock, the lightning current—there is power hidden in them all, power stored up for use, pressing itself on our attention, and waiting to be liberated and put under yoke for man.

If we pass from the domain which material science has explored into that of mind, we shall find ourselves in yet another world of power—intellectual power, moral power, power of truth, of example, of character. Every existing form and development of moral and mental life is at the same time a vessel filled with power.

Our social life carries us one step further into this view of our possession of power. The laws that express our sense of justice, the principles we have inherited from the past, the rights we enjoy as citizens, and our arts, literature, and commerce, are so many shrines of power, which we are using and seeing used every day of our lives.

But there is one power to which we all have access, and which also is waiting to be used—a power so high above all the others I have named, yet so near to us, and so pervading the region to which our highest relations belong, that it ought to be looked at by itself.

This is the power which resides in, and comes forth from, Christ.

The other powers are made by God, and are gifts from God. This is the very power of God Himself, His own life's power, the power of the character and the revelation of the character which He has made to us in Christ—in a real sense, Himself. A force or power clothed in the very form of God: Divine without and within, the power of God—not of something He made, but of Himself—"Christ, the power of God."

A company of young men were once met at supper in the old days of Athens, and Socrates, the great teacher of morality, was present. The conversation turned on their guest. "Socrates," said Alcibiades, "is like the figure of the Wood-god which you see in the workshops of sculptors: if you open it, you shall find it filled with images of all the gods." That was the highest praise which in those days of heathen worship it was possible to give to a human being. It was as much as to say, that all the forms of Divine life, imagined and worshipped at that time, were to be found in the one life of Socrates. And, far off, it may be taken as an outshadowing of the reality presented to us in this word of Paul's concerning Christ.

He possesses, He is for man the sum of, all the forces which are in God. Every form, every aspect,

every attribute, every principle and influence of the Divine life are to be found in Him. In His one life are to be found the pity of God, His longsuffering, His gentleness, His goodness, His liberality, His righteousness, His holiness, His truth—in Him are hid all these treasures.

Whatever in God's revelation of Himself has influence, it is in Christ. Whatever of God we can lay hold of, and use in any work of the soul, or work for the race, it is stored up for us in Christ. To receive Him into heart or home or Church, is to receive the fulness of the power of God.

What an immense fact this is!

It touches, it affects a whole world of the most important interests we can have.

Are we interested in the result of the conflict between good and evil?—Here is the armoury out of which the weapons must come which are to determine the result.

Are we interested in the conversion of the heathen world to God?—Here is the grand storehouse of ways and means, of motives and encouragements, of principles of procedure and spiritual help. Are we concerned about the spread of materialistic views in our day? Are the leaders of public thought unbelievers? Are sceptical principles taking hold of our generation? The insights which shall detect the weak places in the arguments of the unbelievers, and the inspirations which shall give form to the better thought of a new and happier time, are stored up for us in Christ and waiting to be drawn forth. Or is it the salvation of individual souls in which

we are interested?—The truth which converts, the love which constrains, the whole sum of influences on which the salvation depends, must be sought in Christ.

Look for a moment or two at the work I have last referred to—at the salvation of a soul. And look at this—you who are Christ's people—in the light of your own experience. Let us begin our examination at the moment when the soul, already touched by the power of God, has awakened to anxiety about its spiritual state. Almost the first discovery the man makes concerning his state is that he is himself unable to alter it. He looks into his heart—the elements of salvation are not there; into the record of his past life, and they are not there.

Dimly it may be, but surely working in his conscience, is the conviction that there can be no salvation, except by the great way of rightness between God and himself. And he is not right with God. There is only the memory of evil thoughts and evil states, and perhaps also evil courses, on his life; and there is also, daily and hourly, felt the conscious pressure of the love of evil which led to these.

Who shall deliver the man from this body of death? Who shall take those two hindrances away; the dark record within, with its stains of guilt, and the troubled fountain of evil desires?

The man's necessity is one that turns his whole nature towards a power greater than himself. And the mercy of God is, that the very power he needs is provided and waiting to be used. Christ is that power, the very power of God; the power first of the outshining and

offer of mercy and forgiveness from God, and next of a new heart and life. A power of blotting out and taking away that deals with the sin-stained record within; and a power of renewal and new life that deals with the still rising fountain of evil desires.

Christ interprets God to the man. He folds within the mercy of God this soul weary with sinful ways. He lays the hands that were pierced over the guilt of the past; He begins to dry up the fountain of evil desire. And step by step, like a mother encouraging her child to walk, He leads the new-born soul nearer and nearer to God—in beneath the smile of His countenance—until at last he is wrapped round and round with that sense of oneness with God, which is the peace that passeth understanding, and the soul's joy in the grace of a reconciled Father.

It is by the same power that the after-life of the soul is advanced. The way *in* God is as much dependent on Christ as the way *to* God.

In this new stage there is much which the Gospel, acting in its proper domain, seems by itself to accomplish. It keeps fresh before the soul the vision of the love that died on the Cross. It keeps before the heart the pure and high ideal of Christian life, and the sanctifying thought that we are temples for the Spirit of God, and the grand assurance and hope of resurrection life. But even there is more than this. From the moment the new life begins, the career of the soul is one of living fellowship with Christ. The soul lives; but Christ lives in him. He devises, he acts, he goes forward in the

strength, and spirit, and actual fellowship of Christ. Outwardly his life is like other lives, a life of trial and burden-bearing, of sorrows and hope. Only he does not advance to his trials or hopes alone, but hand in hand with Christ. This is the mystery of Christ's power in Christian life. This is the explanation of the profound sorrows and high joys it sometimes exhibits. It is Christ in you that sorrows. It is Christ in you that rejoices. And Christ is the spring of strength in the faith which overcomes the selfishness of your heart, and the sin to which that selfishness leads, and the fear of death which is the shadow of the sin.

II.

These are familiar illustrations of the power of Christ. They belong to the experience which is common to all Christian life.

But I will take you next to a domain of life where this power is exhibited in a more complex and wide-spreading way.

I will take you to that section of our social life towards which the eyes of the Christian community are turned with such a wistful gaze at present: to the deep, in which the careless, the sunken, the lost of our population lie.

It is not single souls anxious to be saved we have to think of here, but multitudes who do not care about salvation, who in many cases do not even know what it is. These are the people who are found in the slums of our cities, in the back lanes of our villages—people

poor and wretched, thrown together by their miseries, without interest in life, without hope, without chance of rising to better things. People of the lowest class, herding together in a life that is infested with evil passions and temptation, and clouded with misery: heathens, women degraded, children brutalised, drunkards, neglecters of home: living in squalor, poverty, and wretchedness. It is a world of misery and sin. And the difficult problem submitted at this moment to the heart and conscience of the Christian Church in this country, and therefore to us, is the lifting up of those lost souls, those sunken, into pure and healthy Christian life, and the reclamation of the waste places in which they are living their miserable lives.

One fact we have to take into account once. The task which has to be faced in such wastes is not a spiritual one only. Improvement of circumstances, abolition of hurtful laws, building of healthy houses, admission of clean air, these are as needful as spiritual instruction. It is a many branching complex task, requiring special gifts and agencies, task difficult, many sided and slow, in which vested interests will be an obstruction, and social habits a drag, and the natural indifference of the human heart, and inherited tendencies to evil, a weary bar.

Who is sufficient for a task like this? Who is able to descend into these deeps and bring healing and deliverance to the lost?

One strange but blessed fact meets us at the very threshold. The work to be done is such that some portion of it is certain to be undertaken by workers who

have ceased to call Jesus Lord. Nobly, sincerely, such workers labour at this task, with a high human spirit they persevere in it. Only they do not acknowledge a Christian motive, and perhaps refuse to be called Christian. None the less, it is Christ who impels them. It is His power which makes them honest in their task. Christian and non-Christian alike, workers in this great endeavour, are impelled to their task by one same common passion, the gracious Divine passion of humanity; and of that passion there is but one source: it is the heart of Christ. Human souls, driven by stress of honest thought, think they can separate themselves wholly from Christ; but long after they have ceased to hold His doctrine, or yield Him open allegiance, they are moved by the sympathies they have learned from Him, and are under the spell of His love.

But by Christ's own people the power is felt in a fuller and directer way. Gratitude for their own salvation, their sense of indebtedness to Him, and the desire to increase His joy, open channels in their hearts through which the power acts. Not the first impulse only, but all the influence needed at every onward step comes from Him. *His example* stimulates; *His sympathy* enters into their hearts; His patience, His persistence in dealing with this very problem in other days, tell upon them. It is in gifts of inspiration, practical wisdom, and perseverance He conveys His power. The bands of workers, the various agencies, may seem to move by their own strength towards their great end; but the power behind them, and in their hearts, urging and encouraging them, is the power of Christ.

And that is the hope for this great problem. The Christian workers who have taken it in hand are not alone. Christ is with them. Already, in the very fact of their consecration to the work, He has lifted them up into the air of heaven; He has baptized them into the spirit of the Cross; and He has made them feel that they have been sent forth to their difficult task as His representative and in His strength.

Unseen, He walks at their head into the waste places. His compassionate heart flows out, through all their endeavours, toward the people who are to be lifted up. The memory of His past achievements is in their hearts. Over and over again, in other lands, at other times, He has drained worse marshes of evil than this, and turned the wastes into fruitful fields. He will not fail in this task at our own doors to-day. Through the loving workers who have given themselves to His service, He comes where the need is deepest. Through their eyes, He looks upon the wretchedness. Through their hearts, He feels for the woes. Through their lips, He speaks to the sunken. It is a Brother who speaks. His words are an opening into a better world. The people begin to be attracted. Little groups are gathered into mission-halls. A new interest in life stirs in them. The spirit which Christ has breathed into His band of ministering helpers —the considerateness, the tenderness, wins them over. "Come, My brothers; Come, My sisters," He says through the preachers; "My Father cannot bear that you should be outcasts." He goes near to them. He takes up their burdens. He brings their barren lives before the Father in prayer. He teaches the sufferers themselves to cry for

help. And the long endeavour begins to show its fruits. The hands bound by sinful habits begin to be loosed. The dead souls begin to live; and the thieves and the drunkards, and the women degraded, and the children brutalised, begin to sigh and cry to God for a happier and purer life. Even with such results, work of this kind will seem to mere onlookers very humble, very slow. It *is* humble; it is slow. It is the work of the lowly and patient of Christ's servants among the most sunken of Christ's creatures. But it, just for that reason, shows forth the power of Christ; and it will bear looking at in its humblest details. I will take you, before passing from it, to one of its details. The Lord wishes to turn a particular spot in the sunken district into a little bit of the Garden of God. He selects a mother in a very humble home to be His instrument. She has neither culture nor learning nor intellectual ability. She is simply a mother and homely. He touches her instincts with a yearning for His life. He touches her heart with thoughts of His love for her. He makes her willing to follow and endure His ways. He fills the motherly heart with divine ambitions for her children. Humble though she is—and poor and friendless—she resolves to bring up her children in the fear of God. She teaches them to pray. She trains them to love the Saviour. They become a little circle of worshippers about her knees. She becomes a spiritual centre amid the desolate homes of the district. Her Christian character tells; her patience, her trust in God, her words, her daily behaviour arrest attention. A silent process radiates from her. An influence for good goes forth from her day by day. Impressions of a new

life are quietly made. Little touches are laid with gentle force on the hearts around her. And then, when the years of her life have run, and she passes away, she has left behind her a Christian home where there was none before, and the fragrance of a sainted memory, which will go on working for God when she herself lies silent in the grave.

III.

By these statements and illustrations I have brought you one step further in this contemplation of our Lord as the power of God. I have brought you to the fact—which, indeed, was implied in all I have already said—that this power is not confined to the person of Christ. Only the fountain of it is there. It is distributed power. Wherever His life is, the power is. Christ the power of God so far as Christian work is concerned, is practically Christ in His people—Christ behind their life—Christ moving in Christian lives—Christ in the endeavours, the prayers, the labours of His people, as they go forth to fulfil His command, in extending His kingdom on the earth.

"Christ the power of God!"

Think of the power in this view of its expansion and distribution. The whole Christian household is filled with it: the missionary going forth to heathen countries; the missionaries doing work for God in the slums; the young lady going to her Sunday class; the young man trying to bring other young men to God; the pastor

at the sick-bed; the preacher in the pulpit; the congregation singing praises to God—they are all manifestations—varied, rich, effective—of this power of God which is in Christ.

And that is God's force in all Christian work—in all its problems, and difficulties, and conflicts. It is the life of Christ—the tenderness, the wisdom, the self-surrender, the zeal of Christ in the lives and labours of His people.

The multitude which no man can number, the communion of saints scattered throughout the world—if we could see their lives, through the influence they are exerting, we should find that every life is a vessel filled with this Divine force, and that the whole organised multitude, over all the immense surface it covers, and in all its varieties of race and language and circumstance, is sending out streams of it, in every direction, for the healing of the nations.

I have only skirted the edges of a great subject. I have but given you a few homely illustrations. It opens up into deeps I have not attempted to touch, and takes hold of the entire movement of turning the world to God, both in the past and the future.

I will not longer dwell on it. I will leave it to your own further consideration.

But in closing, I want to say that it is the fact of facts for you of this church to take into your hearts to-day. In the measure in which you understand it and lay it to heart, will be your prosperity as a church, and the success of the new ministry which begins this morning among you. I do not speak to you as a

people who need to be instructed in the duties of the ministry. Your record is in the past. You have had distinguished ministers over you. But suffer me to say that it is the power of God in Christ which your young minister comes among you to wield. He comes to speak to you for God and of God; and the message he is to proclaim is itself "the power of God unto salvation to all who believe."

It is an unspeakable boon for a congregation to have a man in the pulpit who will spend himself in the great task of setting Christ before the hearts of his people. But do not overlook the fact that this work of wielding and urging the power of God unto salvation, which is in the Gospel, will be all in vain, unless there be open hearts in the congregation to receive the power.

Glorious though it be, the Gospel is but an angel's song in the air, until the hearts of those who hear it open to admit it, and their feet hurry to carry it to waiting and hungering souls outside. Do not suffer the Gospel that is to be preached here to be a mere song in the air for you. It is Christ calling. It is the Divine force in the life and word of Christ seeking channels and instruments, willing hearts, and helping hands. It is Christ speaking through His servant, and His message saying, Who will live My life? Who will carry My message? Who will bear My burdens? Who will carry on My work?

It is not enough that there be a fair vision of Christ in the sermon. The fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, Christ must ever be. He will be an

object of beauty, a glory to admire, and, in a sense, a power of God—even when He is only in the sermon preached. But not until He has been admitted into the hearts of you who hear shall He be the power of God diffused, multiplied, and sent forth into your homes and spheres of daily toil and business.

You want still to be a strong and prosperous church, a living and joyous church. That is the living and joyous church, the strong and prosperous church, where this power of God, which is in the Gospel preached, flows day by day into the lives and homes of the membership. And how strong such a church is who can tell?

What is man yoking his fire steeds to ships and trains of carriages, compelling the lightning to carry his messages and light his streets, compared with a company of Christian worshippers who have admitted Christ into their lives, and are in consequence organs of the power of God?

O men and women baptized into the great name of God, and in your individual beings rich in the possession of faculties more precious than gold and silver, made to carry this very power of God—faculties of thought, of feeling, of speech, of relationship—do you know what would happen in this very town, and over all the towns and cities of our land, if all who have been baptized into that name were to consecrate those faculties of their being to God and His work?

It is an effect so great, so wondrous, so beautiful, that only the most wonderful changes in the natural world can picture it:

"With joy and peace should then be led
The glad converted land;
The lofty mountains then should sing,
The forests clap their hands.

"Where briers grew 'midst barren wilds,
Should firs and myrtles spring;
And nature, through her utmost bounds,
Eternal praises ring."

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

LUKE x. 29–36.

THERE are questions which reveal more of a man's life than his biography could do.

It was such a question which this poor scribe put to the Lord. He knew his Bible by heart; he knew the sum of the Ten Commandments; he could tell off at once the great commandments, "*love to God and man.*" Yet he did not know what the commandments were given to teach; he did not know to whom kindness and human heartedness were due.

Who is my neighbour? Who has claims upon me? By what marks shall those claims be admitted?

A man has fallen into a great abyss who has that question still to put. Into that abyss the whole nation to which the scribe belonged had fallen. With the Book in their hand which insists on human kindness as the Old Testament does, which goes the length of saying, If you come upon an ox or an ass in peril of death you are to deliver the beast, they yet did not know the elementary fact in human righteousness, who was a neighbour.

It was the case of the whole world at that time. The great teacher of the pagan world had ready answer to

the question, Who was *not* a neighbour? Their religions were religions for privileged classes. The poor, the ignorant, the enslaved, the sick: these were not neighbours. The principle of their intercourse in social life was the principle reproved by our Lord, when He said, "If ye love them who love you, what reward have ye? Do not even sinners the same?"

It is the principle of the world's intercourse in all ages. The question put by the scribe is repeated in a hundred varying forms in our own day. What is the hatred of native races which we find so common among colonial settlers? What underlies the contemptuous inferences of certain ethnologists that such races are doomed to perish? What gives rise to the mockery of Christian effort to reclaim these races by the Gospel? What turns the childishness, the inaptitude, the superstitions of such races into a jest? What, even among ourselves, among people of culture, is that withdrawing from, that scorn of—so violent, so intolerant, of people uncultured of their own race? It is just the working of the very ignorance which in our Lord's presence put the question, "Who is my neighbour?"

It is a great exhibition of our Lord's wisdom that He gave no direct reply to the question which was founded on this ignorance? You will notice that He restates the question, puts it in a new light, and with a new reference. The question as put to Him relates to those who *need* our help. Who among such as need our help is a neighbour? In other words, Who has claim on me?

The question implied the presence before the mind of the scribe of various sufferers who might need his help;

as if he had invited the Lord to distinguish among some row of miserable objects—blind, sick, poor, naked—and tell him which of all these he was bound to help: who among such a crowd of sufferers was neighbour to him.

Now, our Lord, as I have said, did not reply to the question as so put. The man was searching among those who *needed* compassion to discover the neighbour. Our Lord showed him that the answer must be sought among those who can *bestow* the compassion. He therefore altered the circumstances implied in the main question; He dismissed all the crowd of wretched objects *which* filled the questioner's mind, with one exception. He left on the scene a poor man wounded and near to die. He introduced men who had the power to bestow compassion. One went past; a second went past; the third used the power—he took compassion on the man. And then, when the story was fully told, the Lord turned round on His questioner, with the question restated, reset, pointing no longer to those who need the help but to those who can bestow it, and said, "Which now of these three was neighbour unto him who fell among the thieves?"

The parable of the Good Samaritan is at once the restatement of the question, and the Lord's answer to the worldly scribe. I find in it four great practical truths.

1st. It is the neighbourly heart that determines the neighbourly deed.

2nd. It is only the neighbourly deed which reveals the neighbourly heart.

3rd. Occasions of neighbourliness are placed for us along the paths of our daily life.

4th. To neglect these occasions is to make ourselves partakers of other men's sins.

I.

It is the neighbourly heart which determines the neighbourly deed. That means that neighbourliness does not wait for the discovery of some quality in the object before it exercises itself. It is not something in circumstances or persons outside of myself which is to determine my neighbourly deed. The Jewish scribe thought it was. The wise men of Greece and Rome thought it was. The men and women of "the world" think it is. It is the *class mark*, the *blue blood*, the *white skin*, the *cultured mind*, the *place in the church*, or *on the map*, or some other quite external or accidental mark in the object which is to draw out our sympathy and help—that is the abiding conviction of Christian hearts, that is of the world.

See how our Lord replies to that conviction. When He comes to describe the object, He is careful to characterise him in the most general way. It is a picture stripped of every element but one. That one is his humanity. "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho." There was nothing more. He was not a Jew—this "certain man"—nor a Samaritan, nor a Roman, nor an Ethiopian, nor a Greek. At the time the parable was told he might have been any of these. He is simply a man. It may be said, "There is *this* to draw out neighbourliness." But even this is veiled—withdrawn

from sight as much as possible. Poverty covers it: he has been robbed of all. Blood covers it: he is all wounded. Death is creeping up to cover it: he is half dead. His very clothing, by which the passer-by might have judged whether he belonged to upper or lower classes, is gone. There is nothing left but his shape as a human being—and that is veiled by the shadow of death.

If he had been a Jew, the Jewish priest might have come near to him on that account. If he had been a Samaritan, the Samaritan might have lost the crown he gained by being drawn to help him by this fact. But he was nothing but a poor, sick, blood-covered, apparently dying man. He has neither history, nor character, nor circumstance; and therefore, it was not down in the torn and battered object the spring of the neighbourly conduct was found. It was in the heart of the passer-by. First came the priest—the official man of that age: all the circumstances of royal neighbourliness are present; but he was without the neighbourly heart. Next came the Levite—the literary man of the time: the circumstances remained the same; but he too was destitute of the heart. At last came the man who had that heart, and the neighbour was found. It was his neighbourly heart which determined his neighbourly deed.

Doubtless this was strange light to the narrow-hearted scribe. And the manner in which men repudiate mercy's claims in such matters shows it to be strange light still. Yet it need not be strange. It is light which is in all nature, in all providence, in all redemption. What is the sun but a great neighbour shedding its beneficent light on the earth? The earth itself is the

bountiful mother and neighbour of us all. Providence, with its continual gifts, is the Good Samaritan in our daily lives; and the Cross of Christ is the revelation of the Good Samaritan in a world all wounded and broken by sin.

Oh, we well know the wounded man of our parable when we look at him in the light of the Cross! He is that familiar of our lives, the heart that goes out from God. He is Adam wounded by disobedience, outside of Eden, among the thorns and briers of the wilderness. He is the poor prodigal far from his father's home, wasted and hungry, and lost in the far land. He is the citizen of Zion who has left its glory, who is "going down from Jerusalem," "the Holy City," to Jericho, "the City of the Curse." And Jesus is the Good Samaritan Himself, the Divine helper, the man with the neighbourly heart, who did not wait till we had established a claim on His mercy, but came to us, moved by compassion, and bound up our wounds, and gave us of His oil and wine "when we were yet without strength."

Beneficent Saviour! Well may Thy people lift their hearts to Thee! Not to anything in us, but to Thy heart of love and mercy be traced for ever the springs of our salvation.

II.

It is the neighbourly deed which reveals the neighbourly heart. It is not nearness to the object requiring help, it is not looking at it, it is not speaking about it feelingly however, it is not thinking of it, it is not knowledge of action: it is action itself, it is doing

the kindness. The priest and the Levite knew the law, knew their duty in relation to the wounded man; had, without doubt, reflections of some sort; but through these reflections or knowledge shone no light of love. There was no "drawing out of the heart," as Isaiah puts it; no going near with blessed human help. "*They passed by on the other side.*"

There are some little touches in the story which it is worth while in passing to glance at. The one *saw* him; the other *came and saw* him. There was just the faintest possible difference of interest in the motives. The one settled it in a glance: the other was drawn a little way aside; but in the end the second passed as really as the first.

But you must not interpret the conduct of these men too severely. These men are not to be conceived of as monsters in human form; they were commonplace, every-day characters, just such people as we rub clothes with in the streets; or more truly, just such people as we encounter when we enter the world that is in our own hearts.

Very likely these men had feelings, sorrows, regrets, bearing on this very case. They said, possibly, as so many still say in similar circumstances, "It is most lamentable, but unfortunately *we* have no time." Or, "What shocking cruelty in the robbers: we really trust some kind person may come and help the poor man!" Or, "It is really distressing, but of course *we* cannot be expected, with our public duties and so forth, to wait and help." It is even conceivable that they experienced acute emotion at the spectacle, such as people of fine feelings do who weep over novels, or shudder or sob

when Othello puts Desdemona to death on the stage. Emotion! Reflection! Excuses! All that! Perhaps at night in the inn a history of what they saw, with genuine-like tears in their eyes! All that! Emotion, tears, but along with all that not one beat of the neighbour heart.

Far otherwise the Samaritan. His heart revealed itself by action. He did what a neighbour ought to do, and he did it thoroughly. He was mercy—medicine—hospitality, all in one. He emptied himself—as Christ did for us—for this poor sufferer; gave him his beast; gave him his time, his oil, his wine, his money. It is a most teaching fact that the Lord dwells on all this. In describing the conduct of the priest and the Levite, He seems to hurry away from it. He cannot describe *it* too swiftly; there is simply the curt "passed by on the other side," and He is done with them. But when He comes to the kindness of the Samaritan, He rests on it: He turns it round and round before our eyes. It is a flower of heaven He has discovered, and He will have us to see all its beauty. He holds it up in His hand. What a beauty is in stem and coronal. How fine the colours are; how round and clear the eye! It is a precious stone He has found; a bit of the emerald, or beryl, or amethyst of the foundations of heaven. And He holds it up to the light, and we must be made to see how the light plays upon its polished surface, and flashes out colours of heaven. Point by point He lifts up the kindness of the Samaritan, until the deed glows before us in all its fulness of love. Every turn of the narrative is a picture.

1. The first is the gloomy defile on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. The great rocks rise up on every side, casting down deep shadows. Emerging from the shadow at the one extreme are the receding forms of priest and levite; entering the shadow at the other, his eye forced wide by horror, is the mounted Samaritan. He has just seen, in the depth of the shadow, right before his path, that man of quivering, blood-stained flesh, and he knows there is before him one who has fallen among robbers.

2. That passes, and in the second scene we are in the heart of the shadow, but the light of human love is kindling in it. The beast is turned loose to graze. The Samaritan is down beside the wounded man. He has unpacked his oil and wine. How tenderly he handles him; how gently he ministers to his needs; with what an angel's mercifulness he becomes physician, healer, comforter to this utter stranger! Note the gleam of the sick man's eye. He had given himself up for dead; he had seen the cruel passing by, first by one, then of another. Hope deferred had made his sick heart sicker still; and now on a sudden the heavens have opened, and this ministering angel is by his side. It is gratitude, hope, joy, love, life all in one mighty gleam which we are made to see in the next scene.

3. Then we are out in the open plain. The horror and the defile are in the background; the sun is shining, the birds are flying about, the fields are alive with flowers, but the glory of the scene is the Samaritan. In the first scene he was a prince, riding as princes do; he is a servant here, and more princely in service than

before. His poor patient is on his breast; he has made himself servant to the wounded man. See how gently in this ministry of mercy he guides the beast, how softly he helps to sustain the man. What joy plays on his countenance—the joy of heaven over mercy done; and in that upturned face you can read as plainly as if you heard the words, "Courage, my wounded friend; the jolting will soon be over: on the edge of the distance I perceive the inn."

4. At last, in our fourth and fifth scene, they have reached the inn. Night and morning, outside and inside shine from our Lord's portrayal here. Think of the arrival at the door of the inn, in the evening, of the Samaritan with the object of his compassion. There in the interior, on one bench, the robbers who did the wickedness, and on that other, the priest and the Levite who passed by on the other side. See in all the glory of morning light, and with that the noble justice of the Samaritan when he resumed his journey. He will not roll over this burden upon another: the merciful man is just as well as merciful. God laid the burden of this charity on him, and he will carry it to the end. This priest-touch in the story must not be overlooked: the handing of the two days' wages—the two pence—from Samaritan to innkeeper, is the chief point in the scene which closes the series.

And even by this detail we have only caught a faint glimpse and illustration of the great second truth of the parable, that it is the neighbourly deed which reveals the neighbourly heart; that it is the good fruit which announces the good tree, that men are known, not by

what they say, or think, or feel, *but solely by what they do.* It is the neighbourly deed which reveals the neighbourly heart.

III.

Occasions for neighbourliness are placed for us along the paths of our daily life. I believe that there is a good deal of real ignorance as to the sphere of neighbourliness, and people quite honestly put the question, "Where are we to find objects for our compassion: at what point, in what circumstances are *we* to begin?" It is just here, at the putting of this question, that many drift into error. The point where *they* are to begin seems always to lie far away: it is the error of thinking only of far away misery. There is real work of compassion to be done, but not close to us, not at our door. It is away in distant lands: it is misery whose cry only dimly reaches us. There, if we could be present, we should be ready to help.

Now see how this error is met and laid bare. All the three men who are the actors in the story had their probation on paths of daily duty. The priest and the Levite were on their way from or to the Temple; the Samaritan was plainly on an ordinary business journey. This act of mercy was done at a time when he had some business on hand. He did it on a business journey; he did it and then continued his journey; and he undertook to see the work completed on his return from the journey. On an ordinary daily walk the work met him, and on that walk, and amid his relations to business, he did the mercy.

We receive a great light here. Christian benevolence, deeds of compassion, are to be done by us in our ordinary character along with our everyday duties, and on the common pathways of our life. And do not doubt, if you have the heart to do such kindnesses, but you shall find abundance of opportunity at your very door.

It is said here, "By chance there passed that way." By chance. Who but God has the ordering of these chances? As the poet Spenser said—

"It chanced: Eternal God that chance did guide."

The word really means *Coincidence*. Here is the sorrow, the misery, the ignorance, the sin—the evil, whatever it be, that wants to be dealt with and removed. And your path brings you, some day, into the very presence of the evil. What is this coincidence for you? It is God giving you a chance of dealing with that evil. It is God uttering His call to you to come to His help and remove it.

There is a word we often quote to each other at the beginning of the year. We say, "Redeem the time, for the days are evil." And when we address each other in these words, we mean: Be busy in the salvation of your soul, for death is coming on. But such an application of that great word is beneath, is aside from its real meaning. The time we are to redeem is the chance that God gives us to serve Him. He is every day giving you chances to serve Him—by helping those who need help. Redeem that chance; buy it in; make it your own; enrich your life by it.

It is just possible that this parable was first of all an actual story. Let us imagine that it was. What, in that case, happened to the priest and the Levite when they passed by on the other side? They passed by what might have been to them an unspeakable blessing. And this plain business man, who went near to the wounded brother, who saw the Divine chance, and by loyally and humanely meeting it, made it his own, redeemed it, and received into his life an everlasting enrichment.

IV.

To neglect these occasions is to make ourselves partakers of other men's sins. What if no Samaritan had been journeying on that road that day? What if the priest had passed and the Levite, and thereafter no humane helper came? What further, if this half-dead man had sickened and died, the hot sun blistering him by day, the cold air of the East freezing him by night—smitten by heat, smitten by cold, maddened, fevered, exhausted, until he perished where he lay?

Who then would have had to account for his death at the judgment? First of all, without any doubt, the robbers. But not the robbers alone: those who passed him by as well, those who had no pity on him, those who saw him sinking into the pit and did not lift him out. The knife was only half in; by their neglect, by their inhuman passing by, they drove it into the hilt. They made themselves that day servants of the destroyers

And thus we learn in relation to the crime and wretchedness—the sin and misery round about us—that, although we have not caused it, yet, if we are to stand free of guilt in connection with it—if we are not to be counted partakers with those who caused it—we must seize such opportunity as God may be pleased to give us, to deal with the evil, and help to ameliorate or destroy it.

The ignorance and degradation of the heathen world have not been caused by us; but in the providence of God, we have been brought face to face with it, and we are bound to go in to redeem the time, the God-given chance, and grapple with it, if, peradventure, we may be helpers in putting the ignorance and degradation away.

There is misery in our own land, at our very door, which it would be unjust to lay the blame of on the present generation; but if we pass it by, if we do not go near to alleviate it, if it may be to heal it, we make ourselves partakers with those on whose souls the blame really lies. And that is the reason why we may not pass by a grievous outcome of that misery; a misery the most painful, the most tragic any of us can know.

Do you know anything in our social life so sad as that which sends a mother's child into a life of sin for bread? We cannot know, we cannot touch, in most cases, the merciless spoiler who made her what she is. We are able honestly to say we are innocent of that crime. But we are in the presence of it; we see its victim an outcast, abandoned, without one friend in the

whole world, treading the miserable rounds of shame, but carrying about with her, it may be all the while, a reminiscence of happier days, a tremulous hope that some time or other her sad life will come to an end—perhaps also, a deep heart-loathing of the life, and sick longing to be back again within the home where she once knew innocence and hope and love.

This is the glory of the Rescue Societies. They will not leave their sisters to perish. It is true Good Samaritan work they have undertaken. It is Sister of Mercy work. And what a power is theirs in dealing with a social sore like this. Hard and weary is the toil they have laid their hands to. It is not work to be finished in a day. And yet in a day sometimes, what triumphs God gives in response to their working. The kindly look of their sisterly eye, the kindly pressure of their sisterly hand, the loving expression of their Christian sympathy, their humane entreaties, their Divine reasonings with the sinning one, their encouragements, their offers of help—they are not in vain. Again and again they are permitted to see the poor lost one turning her back upon the darkened past, and beginning, far down it is true, yet really beginning the ascent of those steps at whose summit stands the throne of Him who is saying, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow."

But it is time to bring this exposition to a close. The parable was occasioned by a question, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? The question is sometimes, What shall I do to be saved? I put the same question in words from this parable: What shall I do to become

a neighbour—to have the heart of a neighbour, to live the neighbourly life? That, be assured, is the true manifestation of eternal life. And there is but one way to attain to that heart and life. It is to receive Christ into the heart. It is to be born again into the life of that Best Neighbour, who laid down His life for His brethren.

MARTHA AND MARY.

LUKE x. 38–42.

AN unending interest broods over this story. We return to it again and again, finding fresh lessons in it every time. Martha and Mary are sisters to whom every reader of the Lord's life is drawn. In a certain way we feel grateful to them. They opened their home to the Lord when others cast Him out. They believed in Him; they ministered to Him; they worshipped Him. Yet to many readers they are a perplexing study. The one seems to exhibit a life ideal and spiritual; the other a life care-filled and worldly. It is a contrast which everybody feels to be painful, against which we all, at one time or another, have uttered our silent protest. Yet it continues to be felt. The two sisters have come to be looked upon as types of contrasted life rather than living beings, types vague and conventional, mere figures in an old story, portraits of which the true features are effaced, the legend over the one being a word of praise, under the other a word of blame.

But the memory of the two women was not preserved in the Gospels to be a perplexity, or a contrast, or a mere mist-cloud of vagueness and uncertainty. It is plain that, to the two writers who have recorded their

story, the forms of the sisters were definite, clear cut, natural, very human, and such as were to be studied in after days, and pondered and profited by. And certainly the Lord had two very real, very greatly esteemed souls in His presence, when He addressed them as He is here represented.

Let us then this forenoon set ourselves to recall the old scene—this hospitable home in Bethany—those two forms of early Christian life. Let us patiently study this narrative until we clearly understand its meaning, until for us, at least, the vague nimbus and painful contrast shall be dissolved, and the sisters stand out before us in their natural forms, in their sisterly relation, humanly defined, and, as nearly as possible as they must have appeared to the Lord Himself. In order to accomplish this, it will be well at the outset to clear the way by some brief statements as to what those sisters were *not*.

It is as plain as anything written in this book can be, that it is mere error to take them as the representatives severally of the worldly and the spiritual sides of life. All those censures which have been heaped on Martha's care for many things, in the notion that this care was worldliness, are simply to be swept out of our thoughts. Whatever Martha's spirit was, it was not of what the Bible calls the "world." Whatever Martha's defects may have been, they did not constitute worldliness. She was a lover of Jesus; and her place spiritually, whether it was a humble place or otherwise, was inside of the same kingdom of heaven in which Mary sat.

And not less completely should we sweep out of

our thoughts the view that Mary, seating herself as a disciple at the feet of Christ, represented a higher form of Christian life than Martha, who served. This view has been a great trouble to Christian housewives. How many a time has it been said, "Oh that we had more of Mary's spirit and less of Martha's! We are so care-filled and troubled about the things of the house." What such minds run out upon, when this wish is expressed, is the care and worry of household duties on the one hand, and, on the other, the retirement and imagined bliss of spiritual contemplation. But Christianity puts no mark of inferiority on housewife tasks. It is not a religion of retirement and contemplation, but of good sense, good faith, and good works. So far from calling the housewife from household tasks, it lays down rules to guide her in the fulfilment of them, and it adds entreaties that she be found diligent at these tasks. In the eye of Christ, a follower of Him who is also a housewife, and who is diligent in the affairs of her house, is a beautiful object, one on whom both His approval and His blessing rest.

Nothing is more striking in the religious life we have been called to follow, than the way in which it teaches us that we are set in the world, in the house, and out of it, to serve, actively if possible; if not, passively; but in any case to serve. Mere contemplation, mere reading, mere listening have never prospered as forms of Christian life; and we may be certain it was not for anything that could be so named that Mary was commended by the Lord. The law for our life is, "Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

Martha "served," and Mary "sat at His feet." But the Lord, by what He said, did not put any mark of disapproval on Martha's serving. Christianity has lifted all such service—the very humblest kind of it—into the air and light of heaven. So be that it is loyal, free from self-seeking, and rendered as to Christ, all homely service is now touched by heaven. Kitchen, nursery, sewing-room, market—they are but ante-rooms of the house of God, if Christians serve in them. "To sweep the stairs," as George Herbert told us long ago, if it be done as Christ's handmaid, "it is Divine."

Having thus cleared our thoughts from these erroneous conceptions of the difference between those two sisters, let us now try if we can gather up, by a careful consideration of the narrative, what the true state of the case was.

Observe, then, that what brought Martha with her complaint to Jesus was not her serving, her fulfilment of household duties, but this, that she was *cumbered* with serving. It was a temporary worry, an entanglement with many things, a momentary sense that she was unable to overtake her tasks. She was *cumbered*.

We all know what that means. In the best of service things may seem too many for us. Actually they may be too many; or through failure of our strength, they may seem too many. At any rate, it was the burden, the encumbrance, that broke down her patience, and brought her in a moment of weakness as a complainer to Christ.

~~At this point~~ it will be a help to recall the scene. Jesus was stretched on the usual couch on which people

in those days reclined when about to take food. The meal was not yet set on the table, or it was just about to be set. It was just the moment when a housewife's care is most intense. The preparations have been going forward, and now has come the moment when the food is to be served. Put all West End notions out of your mind. There is no cook in the kitchen to carry the burden of Martha's care. There are no waiters to set everything in order on the table. It is the house of two women who are poor. Martha is housewife, cook, waiter, all in one; and up till this moment she has done well. She received the Lord into the house. She was content that Mary might entertain Him till the food was prepared.

But she has entangled herself. She has set herself to show her love by a specially full repast, and it has been too much for her, it has become a burden to her. And just then, when her face is hot with the fire, and her anxiety hot for fear that things may be spoiled at the fire—just then she sees Mary, with cool face, with rapt eyes, listening, as Martha thinks in her impatience, idly to the Lord. And so, caught by this moment of weakness, weighed down by the very burden her love had taken up, and stung by what seemed, but what was not, the indifference of her sister, she came to the Lord and said, "Dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" At this moment even the form of the Lord was darkened out of her view; even He seems to her to act not quite fairly. That is always the way. When we take wrong views of the Christian people in the house, or in the church with us the shadow of our

prejudice reaches over and falls on the Lord as well. Care first leads us to fancy that our fellow-Christians are ill-treating us, then it takes us down another step, and we think that even God is hard upon us.

Now let us leave the sisters for a little and turn to the words and actions of the Lord. And here let me say, and do not be surprised when I say, we must not take those words of the Lord as if they were words in a sermon. We must take them as words spoken in the quiet atmosphere of the home—with home accents upon them, with homely courtesies expressed by them. I mean, He did not utter them as He uttered the words addressed to the unbelieving Pharisees, or even as He spoke to the multitude who listened to Him on the Mount, but gently, pleadingly, I will go further, and say playfully.

Be sure the humane, considerate, brotherly Jesus, whose heart was tender with the joy of being received by those loving hearts, had nothing but goodwill and gentleness in His thoughts when He replied to Martha. Be sure also He took in the situation at a glance. He beheld His friend just as she was. He saw the hot face, the momentary worry, the real entanglement. Do you think the Lord, the all-gracious, the fountain from which everything gentle in our life has been drawn, was such an one as to launch out at a moment like that, to a friend like that, in hard set, or even high set, words? No. He replied to her on the level of the actual circumstances. He, so to speak, came near to her, tenderly sympathised with her, and took up her burden, and in these words: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and

troubled about many things. But one thing is needful." They are all the same as if the Lord had said: "Martha! Art thou troubled so? My coming has proved a burden to thee. Do not suffer My coming to be a burden. I am not ill to serve. Do not trouble to provide many things for the feast. Only one thing is needful. One thing is enough for Me."

And it ought not to surprise us that the Lord spoke to this effect to Martha. In this very chapter we are told that He instructed His disciples, when they entered a house, to eat just such things as were set before them. He was not above speaking about the things on the table.

The clause, "One thing is needful," we have read as if it were a clause in a sermon. We have not tried to read it as a passing sentence, in a little talk at the fireside or at the table, just before the meal was to be served in a poor woman's house. But really it was that. And although every common thing the Lord said suggests other and higher things, the first sense always remains. And there can be little doubt the first sense of these words meant for Martha, and would be understood by Martha, to refer to the food she was preparing.

Now let us go on to the words about Mary, and try to unlock their meaning by the same key. So long as we take the words sermon-ways, they must mean a contrast between the two sisters: a setting Martha down and Mary up; a reproof to Martha, a crown of honour for Mary. But all that would be unnatural, and unlike the manner of Jesus.

If through Martha's worries there was a momentary

breach between the sisters, the Lord was not one to widen that, but to heal it. Do not think of Him, therefore, in reading this second sentence in His reply to Martha, otherwise than as a guest and the friend of both.

The words about Mary are these: "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Now those words, partly from our association with past interpretation of them, partly from the way in which the sentence, "One thing is needful," has been mixed up with them, and made a preface to them, those words seem, just at first sight, as if they were setting Mary very very high indeed, out of sight high above Martha.

But let us still keep the circumstances in view, and patiently consider the first meaning of the words.

Remember that the words, "But one thing is needful," refer to the food which Martha was preparing, and have no immediate bearing on Mary. At any rate, they are not to be looked upon as a background on which Mary's excellence is painted. The words do not mean, as we have so often heard, "Thought of eternity is needful;" "Faith in immortality is needful;" "Anxiety about the soul is needful;" "Salvation is needful;" "A Saviour is needful;" and the wise Mary has chosen that. That is how the story has been read—sermon-ways, as I have said. But that is not how the story should be read. The words about Mary begin and end in the sentence, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Now, what I want to recall for you is the original—the first, and therefore the true meaning, of these words, and the meaning which both Martha and Mary must have attached to them at the time.

We shall reach that meaning by considering what it was which Martha had asked the Lord to do. She asked Him to bid Mary rise from sitting at His feet, and come to her help in the preparation of the meal.

Now, our Lord more than once let out His mind on the places which people chose at feasts. "Do not choose high places," He had said, "but low places; not the highest, but the lowest. Lest, if thou choose the highest, it be taken from thee and given to one more worthy of it." Well, there is an allusion to that strain of His teaching here. Martha, in her momentary impatience, was grudging Mary the seat she had taken. "Bid her rise from it," she said. But the Lord—and be quite sure it would be said pleasantly—replied in substance: "Martha, only look! It is not the seat of honour. She is in the lowliest place. It is at My feet. She is not taking thy place as head of the house, but this humble place, the place of a child, of a disciple at My feet. It is not as if she had sought, like the mother of James and John, a place at My right hand. It is the place at My feet only. That is all she wants for her portion; that is the share she has chosen, just to sit here. Martha, bear with her to-day. She has not meant to vex thee. She has taken the humblest place there was to take to-day. No master of ceremonies can say to one sitting here, 'Rise, go lower down.' There is no lower down. She has chosen that good part, that lowly place, which shall not be taken from her."

And this meaning would be expressed in words which would fall simply, not like the fervour of preaching, but

as the natural outflow of domestic conversation, with gentle accentuation—so as not to vex Martha—so as to soothe her pleasantly. Do not be surprised if I add smilingly, looking right into Martha's face, and by His gentleness and winning ways, bringing her over to His mind, and to the conclusion to let Mary sit where she was. And without any doubt, although it is not here told, He succeeded. For when we next meet with the sisters they are close friends.

Now the question will naturally occur after a study of this kind, What do we gain by surrendering the old familiar interpretation of the passage? ~~And that is a very proper question to put. My reply to it is this:~~ We gain, first of all, escape from a merely conventional reading of the story; we gain what painting gained when it escaped from the gold backgrounds, and ring-halos, and monastic attitudes of the Middle-Age saints and martyrs, and got back to natural expression and human forms; we get back to actuality, to nature, to humanity. And next, we gain an immense freshness in the reading and application of the story. Instead of having to decline to lower levels of interest and truth, we rise to new and unexpected heights.

And it will be my business now, in the short time left to me, to point out some of the wisdom to which a natural reading of this old story leads. And I will place first of all this: That Martha and Mary are brought nearer to us—made more akin to us—are more certainly seen to be of our flesh and blood—than, by the conventional reading, they could be. This is not the only place where the two sisters appear. They appear in the

story of their brother's resurrection, and acting just as we find them doing here.

Martha, hearing that the Lord was coming, rises and goes forth to meet Him; Mary sat at home and wept until the Master called her. That is the same Martha whose form is so active in preparing the feast to Jesus here—earnest, hearty, forthgoing, hospitable, self-denying. There is something to be done. She rises at once to do it. She does not stop to discuss methods, capacities, motives. The work has got to be done for Christ: "Here am I, Lord: accept me." And while others are only dreaming, considering, forecasting possibilities, she is far on the way. But it is just to natures of this make that fits and moods of depression readily come.

Setting forth alone—undertaking more than she has strength for—by-and-by her strength fails her, or fear of failure overtakes her. She is the willing worker on whom the burdens are too readily laid. A sense of injustice—of being overtasked—takes possession of her, oppresses her. She looks round about. Why are others not working by her side? Why is that one secluded there, this one, in that other place? The moment which came to Martha comes to all who resemble her: a moment of self-consciousness, of irritation, of complaining; and the cry goes up, "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sisters, my brothers, have left me to serve alone?" But it is not for nothing that such a moment is suffered to come to any true servant of Christ. It is a moment of insight into the limitation of one's powers, into the waste of energy, into the necessity of returning and being at rest in Christ.

The temptation of natures like Martha's is to mistake bustle for work. If they are moving about enough they think it is well. They are slow to learn the simplicity which is the law of Christ's workfield. They have not yet learned, that for the souls they have to feed as for the Master Himself, "one thing is enough." They multiply, they heap up, they say in their earnestness, "More, still more. We cannot honour the Master enough. Let us give Him refinement, culture, music, rich ritual. On His poor ones outside let us bestow gifts of charity, gifts of healing, clothes, food, money. In the Sunday-school, to His little ones, let us give pictures, amusements, prizes, picnics, decorations." We go on until we are overwhelmed with our much serving. Then our strength breaks down — Martha's moment comes on us—we give out our cry. And the Lord replies to our cry of distress, as He replied to Martha's, by gently leading us back out of our self-made burdens —"Dear ones, but one thing is needful in work for Me, Give Me your hearts. That is the banquet which best pleases Me."

And it is a lesson not less fresh, not less enduring, we get from His words concerning Mary. No doubt He does, in His gentle way, put her choice over against Martha's bustling; no doubt there remains a meaning beyond the first meaning, in the words in which He pled for her. In a far deeper sense than any application to an earthly banquet could bring out, He intended to show that Mary had really chosen for eternity.

Each of the sisters had chosen a place. Martha had chosen the place of head, of mistress, of provider. Bustle,

murmur of work, stir of endeavour—all these marked out the place she had chosen. But you see she had to surrender it. Her strength failed, or her patience failed. She would not be sole mistress any longer. She would be servant under the same yoke with Mary: "Bid her that she help me." But Mary's place could never fall from her, could never be taken from her in that way. Never could come to her in that place overtasking, or weariness, or sense of injustice. It was the dear old place of the lowly, the place of the wise. "With the lowly dwelleth wisdom," as the old proverb says. "*At the feet of Jesus*"—that means the place of a learner, a child, a disciple. "*At the feet of Jesus*"—that means dependence, humility, trust. That is a place which cannot be taken away from us, for it is given to us by God. We can be in that place and fulfil all our Christian and human life. We can go through every stage and circumstance of life, still sitting in that place. Our soul can be at home there, in its outgoing and incoming, all the world over. "*At the feet of Jesus*"—that is a place for time; that will be the best place through eternity.

And how good for us, both that there is such a place and that we know of it. It is the deep, ever-present longing for immortality, which the possession of this place meets. Our hearts go out instinctively towards possessions that cannot be taken away. We would have everything we grasp to resemble the everlasting hills. We clothe every joy, every friend, everything dear with permanence. It is a rude shock to us, it is a mystery we are never reconciled to when we find these possessions passing out of our grasp.

Death seems to penetrate every spot in our dwelling-place. But it is not so. There is this place into which it cannot come. The soul who is seated at the feet of Jesus is already in a land where there is no death. "*At the feet of Jesus.*" You are there for ever. That good portion, that happy place, that best possession no one can take from you.

And that is the place I commend to you all this morning. There is none better. There is none sweeter. There is none safer. It is there you can best fight with sin. It is there you can most successfully follow after holiness. It is a nestling place for Christian faith; it is the place of the Christian child, of the Christian disciple. It will be a joy to you to occupy it. All the time you spend there will be a time of blessing, and it will turn out in your experience to be the good part of your life, the part that shall not be taken away.

CAPTIVITY OF JOB.

"And the Lord turned the captivity of Job," &c.—JOB xlii. 10.

A POWERFUL fascination dwells in this book. Its poetry, its grandeur of thought, its human story, the solitariness of the central figure, his woes, his heart-cries, the perplexities of his soul, the dark shadows which wrapped him round about, and many things besides, combine to draw Bible readers to the book.

It is a book by itself too. It is not only a story of our human life, it is that story dramatised. The Divine Spirit, who elsewhere speaks to us in histories, biographies, sermons, psalms, hymns, parables, speaks to us here in a dramatic poem. I turn to it to-day, however, neither for its form nor its human story, nor for any of the things I have named. I turn to it for the sake of a single aspect of the life portrayed in the story. I wish to lift up and set before you the typical character of the life.

Interesting and fascinating though the life is, it does not stand here for its own sake alone. It was a prelusion of Christ's life, and of the life which He came to bestow upon us; and it preluded and brings out to view the very heart of that life, the redemptive power in the life. It was a manifestation in the remote time to which the story belongs, and in the line of a long

series of manifestations of divine life. That early time was filled with types, and foregleams of a grander time yet to come. As childhood is a type of manhood, and the world of the nursery and the school of the larger world in which we who are old have our daily wrestle, so, in respect of the things unseen revealed to us by Christ, were all those earlier manifestations of divine life, and those partial revelations made to the generations which preceded Christ's.

Sacrifices, lives offered up, priesthoods, tabernacles, water gushing from rocks, water springing in deserts, food descending from heaven—these things not only touched the hearts of those who witnessed them, but reaching forward, pointed to grander realities, to Christ's sacrifice, to Christ's life offered up, to Christ's priesthood, to the tabernacle not made with hands, opened in His flesh, and to all the blessings offered to us in the Gospel.

Among these early prelusions, naturally, now that we look back to them, the human lives seem the richest; the first Adam, in his place and trial, but not in his failure, preluding the Second; the great Abraham, looking upon the glory of the heaven, and seeing there the vision of his countless descendants, preluding the Everlasting Father of the faithful, whose followers no one can number; the great lawgiver, as a servant in the house, writing laws on the outside of our life, prefiguring the Lawgiver who is a Son in the house, whose laws are written on the heart; and besides these, Aaron the priest, and David the king, and Jeremiah the prophet, and others.

The entire backlying world is filled with figures which

exist, not alone for themselves, but for the still greater figure, who emerges from the unseen more and more fully, until at length, in the fulness of time, He stands before men, "The brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person," the fulfilment of all those prefigurings, in what was touched by God in the past.

Among those human types none rises to a greater height, none tells a fuller or more touching story beforehand of the Redeemer, than this to which I have brought you this morning. And because it is so full and beautiful, let us try to understand it—that the joy and comfort of it may always meet us when we turn to this book.

I.

First of all, let us transport ourselves in thought to the world in which the type appears. It is not the Jewish world. The voice that speaks to us in this poem is not the voice of a Jew. It makes no part of Job's glory, for example, that he had Abraham for his father. He is either before Abraham, or outside of his circle; a citizen of that larger world which shines upon us in the earlier chapters of Genesis, and which we come back to when the Apostles go to all nations with the Gospel. No reference here to Moses, to the law, to the deliverance from Egypt, nor to the ceremonial or worship of Mosaic times! It is the free life of a settled country which we find in the book. There are cities, there is also a country life. The chieftain comes up from his country estate to sit in judgment in the city—the people rise up to honour him as he appears. Social life has

been organised. The nomad life is far away or only known as a destructive force coming in from outside. The people know the heats of summer—they know the frosts and ice of winter. A trade element is over all. There are mines, gold seekers, finders of precious stones —a trade in such stones. Science also broods over the life. The stars have been observed, named, mapped out. History also has been studied. Nations are referred to who were overthrown for their wickedness. People are travellers as in our own times. These travellers have been in Egypt—have seen its rivers, its public works, its fruits, its animals. God is spoken of, not as the God of Abraham, but as the Father of the human race. It may be man amid the Arabian hills or the Indian plains, or man in some land other than these, bordered by the sea. You cannot fix the locality of the story. It escapes—it reaches out its hand to the north and the south—it brings winter and summer, spring and harvest, sea and land, day and night, clouds and stars, rivers and seas from some common land into its surroundings.

Here, then, is the first note of interest in this type-story of Job. It is universal in its reference. It rises within the horizon of that world on which the Gospel shines, in which the human race as such evolves its history, which is not local but universal; the world which God surveyed at the end of His creation labours, and concerning which, before sin entered, He said, "Behold, it is good."

In this great, wide world, in this ample home of the human race, where life was not national, nor tribal, but

simply universal, arose the great form of Job, casting forward its special light upon the future, and preluding the greater form of Him who was to come, and who was to come as a Saviour, not of the Jew alone, but of all mankind.

II.

I invite you, in the next place, to consider in what particulars or aspects of his life Job becomes a type of Christ?

For one thing, no doubt, in his sufferings. But it is not enough to say this. Others as well as he suffered, and by their sufferings manifested beforehand the life of the Messiah.

The distinction in Job's case lay both in the occasion of his sufferings and in their character. His sufferings were for a trial of his integrity. It was a trial to prove whether, with all the appearance of serving God which was in his life hitherto, there would be real or the same service, if the circumstances were altered. Will Job serve God for nought? Is it righteousness through and through, or only skin deep? If the earthly welfare be taken away, shall God find the faithful service remaining?

Now that made a great element in our Lord's life. He also was put to the test—to a test the very same in character as that to which Job was put. He was led up into the wilderness to be tested. His entire earthly life was probation. Shall the New Adam prove faithful to God? Shall He continue faithful if the signs of God's favour be withdrawn? We know that, in these

circumstance, He did prove faithful. It is part of our strength and joy, that even when His Father had taken away the last sign of His favour—the light of His countenance—the Lord proved His Sonship, and therein His loyalty to God, by crying, "Father, into Thy hand I commend My spirit."

There was, therefore, in this fact of probation, of being subjected to a testing trial, such a resemblance to Christ's experience in that of Job's as made the old story a foregleam of the story of Christ. Christ was the great sufferer of the race. Every evil that can enter the cup of suffering was poured into that which the Father gave Him to drink. And almost every evil was poured into the cup given to the patriarch Job. He stands up in that old world the greatest spectacle of suffering the world knew till Christ came. Loss of means, bereavement, bodily pain, disease, anguish of heart, shame, poverty, reproach, unjust reproach from the lips of friends, scorning from the worthless, scorning from those whose parents had been fed by him: all this, more than all this, he had to suffer. In his sufferings, so heaped up, so unparalleled, so patiently borne, the form of the old world sufferer preludes the greater form whose sufferings and righteousness in suffering are our life and song.

III.

And yet, true though all this is, it was not in his sufferings alone that Job was a type of Christ. Christ was more than a sufferer, He was a Saviour. Every type fails that does not touch this fact in the life of the Anointed.

The typical element in Job's life reaches forward to this very fact, he also was a saviour. The sufferings to which he was subjected, although he could not know this at the time, had a purpose beyond himself. His sufferings brought him into the same circle with men who were in sore need of a Saviour. Those three men who came to comfort him, who remained to reproach him, thought him smitten of God and afflicted. But in giving utterance to such thoughts they were only bringing into view their own farness from God. Their thoughts were not the thoughts of God, nor of true children of God. They were hard, untender, most sinful thoughts. They sinned grievously by their misrepresentation of God. What they averred in varying language was, that the God whom Job refused to curse, whom he loved, whom he had ever served, whom he was ready to serve still if he had the means, that this God was an enemy, an angry Judge. It was not Job only they condemned. They had no good word to say of God. Not one word about His pity, His tenderness, His mercy, His fatherliness. Heaping arguments on Job to prove him a sinner, they were unconsciously heaping misrepresentation on the name and ways of God. And when the end came, and God had spoken, the forms that are placed before us are *first* the awful form of God vindicating His ways; *next* the form of the patient Job humbled and chastened before God; and *then* the forms of the three disputers—condemned, reproved, and ranked among those who had no standing place in the favour of God. Now, Job was appointed to bespeak the favour of God for them. That is the main fact in which the likeness to Christ comes

to view. In the days of his prosperity the patriarch had served God by his benevolence. The widow's heart had sung for joy because of his kindness. But now these old means of serving God are gone—his silver, his gold, his cattle, his cornfields, his house, his very home. He has nothing to give away. He has not where to lay his head. But this still remains to him, although he be poor he retains the power to make others rich. His integrity remains with him,—that is riches. His oneness with God is still unbroken,—that is riches. And he can still pray and offer sacrifice.

And this now became his means of service. He was advanced to a higher kind of service. Formerly, out of his abundance of earthly goods, he was a helper of the poor and the miserable, now, in the very depths of poverty, in things material, yet out of the abundance of grace, in things spiritual, he became, by his prayers and sacrifices, a helper and saviour of the men who had so cruelly vexed his spirit. His friends were forgiven because he interceded for them.

It was a high moment in his life when he thus prayed for his friends. I see him advancing to the altar at the bidding of God. I see him offering up the sacrifices of that old world worship. I see him doing all this in his rags, with the blotches of disease upon his body, with the waves of anguish not yet spent in the thoughts of his heart. But I see him in the very act passing through a gate grander than any which had ever hitherto opened before his steps, passing into a position new and glorious in the presence of God, the position of an interceding priest. I see this man, on whose head reproaches

had fallen, rising into the glory of a service to God, which consisted in praying for the men who had reproached him, and in that service shaking off all the humiliations through which he had passed, and standing in the integrity which he had never let go, crowned and clothed with the righteousness and the approval and the benediction of God.

IV.

It is here, at this point, in this service when the sufferer offers the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, and the sacrifice of atonement and intercession, that the full type appears. In that moment he prefigures that still more solemn moment, described so pathetically by Isaiah, when it pleased the Lord to bruise our Redeemer, and put Him to grief, and His soul was made an offering for sin.

The type can never equal the reality. It is a foregleam and revelation, a light shining in a dark place. But it is ever a light preluding a greater light. And it is to this greater light, in two most beautiful unfoldings of it, I desire in closing to turn your thoughts.

The reality of which Job's prayers and sacrifices were the far off adumbration, was the atoning sacrifice of our Lord. But it came short of the reality, just where the old world vision of God came short of that which Christ revealed.

In that old world much had been wrought out by religion in human life and worship. The obligations of neighbourliness, of friendship, of home, were known, were felt, were acted on. And, therefore, it lay in the

very line of the highest attainment of the old world, that Job should offer the sacrifices and the prayers he did.

But they were sacrifices and prayers for friends. Although they had reproached him, they still were friends. Their reproaches had not broken the old ties, nor loosened the old relations. They were friends. And for his now humbled friends this patriarch priest of the Almighty offered sacrifices and prayers.

It was a great step. But it was only one half of the mighty circle of Redemption. It is not friends alone for whom Jesus offered His sacrifice, or prayed. The New Testament revelation is the revelation of a God, and then of a life, that comes forth to save enemies as well as friends. The revelation reaches its highest expression in the great words of the cross: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

And this is Christian life, in the reach by which it transcends and goes beyond all previous life known to man. It is the forgiveness, the salvation of enemies. And this is the glory of Christ as a Saviour, that He is the Saviour of enemies. And this is the wonder of Divine love set before us in the Gospel. It is Christ dying for His enemies.

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." That is the very principle of the Cross: the practical outcome of the sufferings of Christ. It is God heaping coals of fire on the head of His enemies. This greatest gift in His possession, this sacrifice of His Son's life, it was for enemies, that the enemies might be

reconciled, changed into friends, brothers, children saved. This fire of love laid on hearts cold to God, to warm them, on hearts hardened against God, to melt them, that was the reality to which Job's sacrifice pointed. It is simply the fire of forgiving love, the love displayed on the cross sinking down, by Gospel means, into the wide-spread, deep-lying mass of still unconverted hostile life in the world. That is light for man, for the race. It lays bare to us the deep, central, all-conquering secret influence of the cross, and God's way of redeeming the world by the Gospel.

That is the first of the two beautiful things I referred to, which appear in the fuller light of the sufferings of Christ as compared with the sufferings of Job. The other comes to view in the *result* of their prayer and sacrifice, for both type and Antitype, for both Job and Christ.

We are told that the Lord "turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." The last shadow passed out of his life *then*. He became their helper—their saviour. And *then* the Lord lifted him out of all his sorrow, reinstated him in his old position, surrounded him with his previous honours, vindicated his life and character, put pain and sore and loathing and misjudging and reproach away.

And in just these same circumstances, in just this same high moment, the Father opened the gates of Heaven for the suffering Saviour. After the sufferings for His enemies came the Resurrection, and the Glory, and the Throne, and the Crown.

Job, rising out of his humiliation and having his

captivity turned; Christ, emerging from His sufferings into possession of the Kingdom;—it is one light, the light of the type reaching far forward, the light of the Antitype reaching high and far, and carrying on its wings this great lesson, which I lay on your hearts, that the path from sorrow, at its deepest, is the path of helping those who need our help.

We also, as well as Job—as well as Christ our elder brother—are to have our captivity turned, and to be made perfect by suffering for others.

For us also, as for the old type, as for the great Antitype, there is, as Christians, a work of intercession. We have to go before God and plead for a world unsaved. And that is truly the last best lesson we should find in this old story. It was not for himself alone that Job was subjected to those sufferings. It was not for Himself alone that Jesus suffered. In type and Antitype it was to perfect and enlarge the power of helping others.

We are sometimes told that dark days are coming on the Church of Christ—its glory is to fade, its influence to disappear. If such days should ever come to it, the way out from them is set before us here. It is the tried way of helping those who need its help. For the Church as for Job, for the Church as for the Church's Head, the Lord will turn the dark days into bright days, when it sets itself to fulfil truly its work as a Church.

Christ was for us when there was no eye to pity but His own. As members of His Church we are now set, in our Christian vocation, to be for Him, to help as He helped, and to extend His salvation in the world—a world in which still there is no eye to pity but His.

And as surely as God blessed Job in praying for his friends, and crowned Jesus in dying for His enemies, will He bless the Church, however dark the days may be, that sets itself to this work.

And this law is for individuals as much as for the Church. If there be any one here to-day bound by cords of suffering and anguish as Job was, any child of the loving Father shut up by some special darkness, from whose heart is rising the cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" the way out of the darkness, believe it, and above the anguish, if it be for the sufferer a possible way, is the great way I have been setting before you, the highway of the cross, the tried and blessed way, the way on which so many of God's sufferers have had their captivity removed, the way of serving God in the helping of those who need your help.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND ITS DEVELOPMENTS.

"Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary: praise Him in the firmament of His power.

"Praise Him for His mighty acts: praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

"Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the psaltery and harp.

"Praise Him with the timbrel and dance: praise Him with stringed instruments and organs.

"Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals.

"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord." Ps. cl. 1-6

"God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship *Him* in spirit and in truth." JOHN iv. 24.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world." JAMES i. 27.

THREE worlds open to us in those texts I have read: three worlds of worship.

Looking through the psalm, we see the world of choral service,—the richly dressed choirs, the splendid instrumentation, the joyous excitement of Jewish worship at its best.

Looking through our Lord's words to the woman of Samaria, we see the eternal depths in which all worship must find its spring,—the deep underworld of truth and spiritual life.

Looking through the words of James, we see the end

to which the worship of the Jewish Temple pointed, to which the inner worship of the spirit leads,—the flower and fruit of all other worship,—the ritual of life and deed,—that world of worship whose daily service is the ministry of loving-kindness and purity.

And putting those three worlds before us in one line of vision, we come on the great law of development in connection with public worship. We find one thing leading to another; knowledge to praise; faith to action;—germ to fruit,—until we reach the best and highest of all. And we learn that David organised his choirs of Levites, and David's Lord opened up the fountains of spiritual life, that by the natural action of these on the human spirit, men and women in all generations might be trained to just conceptions of the greatness, majesty, and goodness of God—and enabled not only to bring spiritual sacrifices into His house, but, proceeding thence, to fill the vast all-surrounding field of humanity with a worship, whose songs shall be the sweet rythm of footsteps treading the paths of mercy, and the music of tender and holy sympathies poured forth on the lonely and the sad.

It is this on which I intend to offer some thoughts this morning:—*The development of the function of Worship* in the Church's life.

I.

Since the time when twelve worshippers sang a hymn in an upper room at Jerusalem, and went out to the Mount of Olives—separating themselves by that act

from Jewish worship—a long history of this development has taken place. From the simplest elements of faith and personal love, breathing their untried life in homely prayers to Christ; from a worship which was mere rapt vision of new truth, and hidden joy over a new treasure in the heart, the worship of the Christian Church ascended — through psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, through chants and liturgies—to a service as gorgeous as that of the Jewish Temple, the service offered to God as worship, over all Europe, on the eve of the Reformation.

If we consider our own times, the characteristic which future historians of the Church must make most of, will be,—that they were times in which a great revival of the function of public worship took place, and greater attention began to be given to the modes in which worship should be conducted.

It is easy to denounce this revival as mere "Ritualism." It is still easier to say, that it is retrogressive, Jewish, and Popish.

But hurling such reproaches against it will not explain it, nor account for the force of it, or for the influence it is exerting in this country at present on all who worship in Christian Churches.

What does this revival of a greater attention to worship signify? How has it arisen? Whither is it tending?

If these questions were put to those who have carried the revival the farthest, to those whom, without the slightest intention of disrespect, I will call the Ritualists, the answer which would spring at once to their lips,

which they have already in their published writings recorded, would be—"It is a reaction from the Reformation. A protest against Protestantism."

But in a great throng of people moving, it is not those who are deepest in the throng who can best tell the directiou in which it is moving, or what the influences are which sway it, now this way and now that.

The party I am referring to have come under the impulse of the revival more largely, perhaps, than any other, but they did not originate it. And they have come under other impulses which, with less life in them, have made a greater noise, and it is not surprising if they should mistake the force which is mainly impelling them.

But it is only for a moment, that this wide spread revival of a deeper interest in the function of worship, can appear to unprejudiced eyes as a reaction from the Reformation.

What took place at the Reformation, so far as public worship is concerned, was a repetition of what took place at the foundation of the Christian Church. Two parties came out from the preceding Church: the one, clinging to all that could be held fast; the other, casting everything except the essential principles to the winds; the one Conservative, the other Radical; the one Ecclesiastical, the other Puritan.

Do I require to say that the history of the Church in this country, in every branch of it, so far as the highest life of the Church is concerned, is the history of the Puritan element? It was the great Puritan party who won for us our civil and religious liberty. The

same party organised Wesleyan Methodism, founded our Missionary Societies, originated the two great Nonconformist bodies in England and the Free Churches in Scotland; and, within the Established Church, maintained, in shallow and godless days, the doctrines of the Cross.

It is true, that this Puritan element came out of the Church of Rome protesting. It came out casting from it, in its sincere horror, everything that was Romish—the old ways, the appointed times, the entire ritual and mode of worship. The protesters seemed to themselves to be a new Lazarus emerging from among the dead. And the ways of their former worshipping they looked upon as the cerements which were to be left in the grave.

They put away the processions, the saint's day, the incense burning, the symbolical dresses, the music, the pictures, the sculptures, the architecture, and other sensuous splendours of Rome. And it seems, no doubt, just at first sight, as if, doing all this, they had put everything belonging to a perfect and beautiful ritual away.

But it was not so. It was the very opposite they did. They put away *the abuse of ritual and decoration.* They said to themselves, "By priests' dresses and clouds of incense, and prayers in a dead language, and processions, and images, and crucifixes, and music, and painting, and stately architecture, our souls have been shut out from the vision of God and from His truth. Let us have back that vision: let us once more hear that truth, if everything else should perish."

And to have back that vision, and once more to possess

that truth, they did let everything else connected with external worship go. With a great sum they obtained their freedom. They gave up everything that fascinated the eye and the ear, that they might retain the reality of worship. And they met in upper rooms, as the first Christians did, and in barns, in private dwellings, in "meeting houses," and "conventicles." And they suffered nothing to come between their spirits and the divine vision, and nothing to stand between God and their worship.

But was it therefore a poor, imperfect, or uncomely worship, which in these circumstances they offered to God? Did they—facing the wilderness, as they did, and going out from splendours, which had ceased to have God in them—thereby cast from them anything that makes acceptable to Him the praises of His house?

No, my friends. The worship of God's house then, for the first time for centuries, sprang into perfect life. Up from the dead painted hollowness of what had become a dramatic show, sprang life-bursts of spiritual worship. Human souls, under the excitement of the recovered truth of God, burst out into real song, into real prayer. And a ritual with almost nothing for eye or ear, but as rich in spiritual elements as the worship of the redeemed before the throne, reappeared in the Church on earth.

If you had heard, as it has been my good fortune to have done, that very ritual unfolding its spiritual riches, among a people still under the Reformation impulse, on a hill-side, on some communion Sabbath, when the blue sky was the temple roof, and the rugged verses of the

Scottish Psalter the only hymn-book;—if you had yourselves ever taken part with a congregation of such worshippers, when they were singing, before the communion, some of the plaintive, or after it the glad and jubilant strains of an older worship—you would need no further word to prove to you that the essence of worship is not what the eye can see, but that which the life gives forth; and that, grander than the grandest cathedral service, is the outbursting of living praise when the fire of heaven is in the hearts of the worshippers.

To one looking coldly on, even such a service might seem poor, and naked, and beggarly. But it was not poor, or naked, or beggarly. It was the rich outbreaking—the full outbursting—of true believing Christian souls, praising and thanking God. It was the worship of God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth.

And Church worship continued to be that—in this country generally—so long as the Reformation movement lasted. But then, alas! came to this movement—as to every other in Christ's kingdom, which fails to keep renewing its youth—the inevitable falling away, and failure of worth and power. The life which had cast off the old ways of worship died down, and became, over a great surface, a mere dead tradition and hollow image of life. And the glory departed from Puritan worship, and it became a dead, dismal thing, and sank into base depths, and so low that, in this very England, it became a mark of piety to use wretched tunes to the psalms, and to sing these tunes in a tone which I will not characterise; and a still greater piety, in assemblies where free prayer was used, to offer long and dreary

prayers, full of wind and controversy and sectarian vanity; and, where the Book of Common Prayer was used, to take liberties with the book, and read it in a poor, meaningless, and irreverent style.

The Ritualistic movement, so far as it is merely ritualistic, is a reaction against *all that*.

So really so, that if you seek the earnest aggressive reforming Puritan now in the Church of England, you will find him—much changed, I admit—but you will actually find him in the ranks of those who are trying, in some cases it may be, by false lights, but, I think, honestly trying to make the worship of the Christian Church what it ought to be.

And so far as the movement of these earnest men is a reaction against bad taste, wretched psalmody, irreverent performance of the service, and unimpressive ways in the Church, it will prosper, and it deserves to prosper. And every lover of true worship will say, "God send it more prosperity."

But if it fall into the great errors into which Jewish worship fell, into which Roman Catholic worship fell, if it make the service an end instead of a means, if it displace the things which God has given a place to, if it put music and flowers and dresses where holiness and truth and charity should be, if it turn the service into a dramatic show, and the praise into a musical entertainment, if it expend hundreds on the service inside the Church, and only tens on God's great works of mercy and healing outside, or, worse than all, if it turn the observance of the Lord's Supper into the idolatry of the Mass, as some of the weak-minded have gone perilously

near to do, then it will as surely come to an evil end as did the Jewish and Roman ceremonials; and God will anew prove that He can be approached without fixed forms of worship, and that He can fulfil the ends intended by these by simple fulness of the Spirit itself.

II.

What I have just said brings us to a second of the questions I have named, What is the present development of worship tending to?

I seem to hear a thousand voices hastening to answer, "Rome." These are the same voices which say, "The movement had its rise in Rome."

No, my friends.

Rome—what is meant by "Rome" when it is spoken of in this connection—will never more, in England or elsewhere, be the terminus at which great Church movements like this shall arrive. As terminus, or anything else, it will never more be the supreme power it once was.

"Rome" is dead and wasting away, dead in those countries where it had the greatest means of sustaining life. It is only a galvanised life it is exhibiting in England.

I do not mean that the vast Roman Catholic Church is dead, or that Christian faith and life are dead among her members. God forbid that I should say such things as these. But all that is Roman Catholic rather than Christian—her additions to Christ's Word, her priestly and sacramentarian errors, her bondage to authority—

can never rally to itself the former glories, can only fight for continuance, and fight retreating from the field. A few idle ladies of the classes who have nothing to do may go to "Rome." A few unstable men, who have never known the truth, or who can only think on one side, may be blown by some sudden wind of doctrine into the same poor haven. But the vision of multitudes flocking over to Rome, or of any considerable section of any particular Church going over, is just ecclesiastical nightmare.

But, judging from such lights as history sheds on Church movements, this is the course which this particular movement is likely to take. The earnest men who are putting forth their efforts to fill up the ritual of their Church according to the ideal of that ritual which they find, or think they find, in the laws and custom of their Church—and of whom it ought to be said that they are as earnest at the same time to preach Christ's Gospel fully—will arrive, as every earnest body of reformers and leaders in a great movement are certain to do, at a time of sifting, when the insincere and the extreme among their party—the Romanisers on one hand, and the mere Church decorators on the other—must fall away from them, and they shall have to pass on, in their appointed path, with diminished numbers and less *eclat*. On this path they will assert and carry out their views until they have arrested the attention of all portions of the Christian Church upon their movement, and until what is good in it has been diffused, appropriated, and embodied in every ritual in the land. And then it will be discovered that their work, great though it be, has been but a partial

and preparatory one. The same Puritan element in the Churches will raise again the question I am considering, but with a further application. Everywhere it will be asked, "What now is to be the practical outcome of this improvement of worship?"

And in that day, no doubt, some speaker for God, and some party gathering around his teaching, will speak the word which the day requires. Christian Churches will see, as they have never before so clearly seen, that the ritual of times and assemblies comes short of its true end, if it do not lead to the ritual of daily life. It will be livingly felt—what, indeed, those who have the lead in, and are acting out the present revival have already begun to realise—that Christian worship has grand occasions beyond the bounds of the house we worship in, or the assembly which worships; and that the true full ritual of Christ's house is ritual of love, self-sacrifice, and life—the very ritual commended in the profound words of James—"This is pure and undefiled religious service, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

What can I say to place before you the vital importance, the grandeur, of the divine ideal of worship opened up for us in these words?

James is writing at a time when true worship had abandoned the ritual of the Jewish Temple, and was seeking new forms in the Christian Church. He had himself taken part in that old ritual. He was coming in contact with many to whom its forms were still dear. He may have been reproached with the baldness of Christian worship. He may himself have felt the con-

trast between the simple prayers and praises of the assemblies he preached to, and the gorgeous ceremonial he had known in his earlier life. But he will not look on this contrast as a disadvantage or reproach. The sublime distinction of the new faith was—not that it was to have no ritual, but that its ultimate and highest worship was to be one of life and mercy, filling the world with its benedictions and songs in the night.

For this is the supreme end of all Lord's Day worship, and of everything which properly belongs to the ritual of our worshipping assemblies. It is a divine means to a ritual grander than itself, to a ritual whose prayers and spiritual songs shall be acts of loving-kindness and charity, a ritual which shall bring the music of gentle words and deeds, and the ministries of Christian sympathy, down beside the still sad music of humanity; and which shall send the worshippers away from their places of worship on Sunday with hearts tingling with the desire to fill out God's ideal to its utmost earthly possibility, to visit the children of sorrow with His consolations, and to do all this with clean hands and a pure heart—lifting up the soul, not to vanity, but to God.

Such, I believe, is the tendency of the present development of worship.

I have now said all which I specially wanted to say. Before I close, let me try to lead you from considerations like these on the mere development of worship, to look for a moment or two more closely at public worship itself.

But how shall I describe to you this great function of the Christian Church? With what words shall I

embody any idea of that, which is actually the ascending of human life and love in sacrifices of thankfulness to the Lord?

When I try to analyse it, I find in it the three great elements of thought, love, and action; but the union of these elements in worship, in the worship of the Father of spirits, who shall conceive aright of that?

I worship God, when I cherish just conceptions of His being and character. I worship, when my heart goes forth to Him in love. And zeal, and obedience, and activity, and perseverance, and consecration of myself to His service, is worship. All prayer with Christian faith in it, all song with Christian joy in it, all action with Christian love in it—is worship of God.

In public worship, the Church lays on the altar her thoughts, praises, affections, capacities, gifts, achievements—the entire life of her whole membership and of every individual—and she offers up these as sacrifices; but the soul and inner life of these sacrifices is simple thankfulness for Christ. This is the deepest fact in Christian worship.

To understand it is to enter as profoundly as it is possible to do into the nature of true worship.

Make for one moment the terrible supposition, that Christ had never come. Imagine the human soul left to approach its Creator by the light of its own intelligence. I try to think of my own soul in such a case. I am at once shut out from God. There is no door by which I can enter. I am stifled, oppressed by the sense of sin in my life. I see nothing where the vision of God should be but blackness; nothing for myself but

despair. The earth is one vast grave. The future, if I should think of a future in such a case, is hell. In my blind, dumb anguish, groping for peace, I will take my child and throw him before the wheels of the unseen power, in whose grasp I am, whom yet I do not know; yet peace and comfort can never be mine.

Now Christ has redeemed me from such a fate. By the sacrifice of Himself for my sins, He has placed me in a wholly new position with respect to the worship of God. Everything that made God a horror to me is taken away. Everything that can draw me to God has been placed before my mind. The redemption He has purchased for me is redemption from all the evil I have described. And the feelings of a soul so redeemed are, and cannot but be, feelings of thankfulness for the deliverance, of grateful love to the Deliverer, of adoring joy in His love. But these are the very feelings which are the soul and essence of the worship of Christ's Church.

If our hearts swell, as Christian worshippers, with gratitude to God, it is because Jesus died for us. The shut door has been opened, and we are free to go in. He has offered the sacrifice of propitiation. He is Himself the propitiation. And as the great High Priest of His people, He has entered into the holy place, "now to appear in the presence of God for us," and to present our love and gratitude, our faith, and zeal, and service—our sacrifices of thankfulness—before His Father.

The foundation of the Church is laid in Christ's blood, and its worship has its foundations there too. The two

limbs of the great arch of Christian life, conversion and worship, rest on the one same blood-sprinkled Cross.

Oh, marvellous result of grace on poor dead humanity! Into the sin-deeps and the death-deeps comes from that Cross the still small voice, making its appeal to the consciences of men. And little groups of worshippers separate from the world, and gather into a Church, and lift up holy hands to God, and consecrate their lives to His service! The spiritual consecration extends from land to land! Over all the wide surface of human life which it covers, ascends now the incense of thankful sacrifice. In the heart of every Christian thought and act is the joyful word, "Thou hast redeemed us with Thy blood." One generation cometh, another goeth; nations rise and fall; this song continues to ascend. Generation after generation pass into the world of glory; the echoes of the same song comes back upon our ears.

The area of worship widens! Its life and form expand! It stretches behind us, sounding down from the past; before us, sounding on into the future! It is around us in the present. We hear it ascending in the prayers and lives of the glorious saints of old. We hear it in the sacrifices of the saints who are living now. We hear it swelling from the lips of coming generations. It fills the earth as the waters cover the sea. And the Hallelujahs of the redeemed in glory are just the waves of this sea of worship breaking on the footstool of the throne of Christ.

NOTE BY DR. M'LEOD.

The preceding Sermon was the third of a series on the Nature and Characteristics of Public Worship. The circumstances under which it was preached, and perhaps also, the interest attaching to what it attempted, may explain the request for its separate publication. [It was printed in 1873, when the organ was introduced into the church at Claughton.—ED.]

The Sermon is an attempt to indicate the origin and tendency of some recent developments of Christian worship. It was preached under the conviction that what is vital in the so-called Ritualistic movement is the result of an impulse much wider than the name of that movement expresses; and also, only one among several co-temporaneous results proceeding from the same source.

No candid interpreter of events could satisfy himself by only tracing it, for example, to "The Tracts for the Times," or Dr. Pusey's teaching. Coleridge and Wordsworth had prepared the way for it by the reaction against the materialistic and utilitarian views of their day which they headed. Chalmers and Irving continued the preparatory work. Dr. Arnold's earnestness—even while protesting against the movement—was a result of that which led to it. So was the spiritual force in Carlyle's teaching—far though that teaching itself was from the teaching of the Church. And the writings of Ruskin and Helps, and the poetry of Tennyson and Browning, although later, must be ranged abreast of the movement.

Like every great movement, it was found in many places at once, "Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood." The venerable Dr. Binney, of London, the great Nonconformist preacher, was certainly no disciple of the Tractarian School. But while that school was making its first noise in the world, he was already at work to improve the service of the Lord's house. In every denomination and Church of Christ in the country, earnest men began to ask, "Can we do nothing to make the Worship of God more worthy of Him to Whom it is offered, and more edifying to those who engage in it?" The architects came under the same impulse, and beautiful churches began to displace the hideous structures in which our fathers were content to worship.

But perhaps the greatest outcome of the general impulse—certainly the one which has had, as yet, the most far-reaching consequences—was the Disruption of the Free Church of Scotland.

Nothing could well be more unlike than the two events—the birth of the new High Church party in the Church of England, and that of the Free Church of Scotland. The one was white, the other black in the view which each took of the other. Yet just those qualities which were put forth in the South came to the front in the North. There was an earnest recalling of past, venerated modes of worship—a fond going back upon ways dear to "our fathers," in what were esteemed the best days of the Church. There was the same earnest endeavour to make the worship of the Lord's Day a living means of spiritual culture for the worshipper. And what was more remarkable still, there was developed, in the North as in the South, the same extension of service from the worship of the house of God to the visiting of the poor and the afflicted outside. A loyal consecration to Christ led the young Free Church, while they were still carrying their first burdens, to go out into the wynds and lanes of our great cities, and carry the means of grace by Mission Churches to the masses.

MINGLED SEED.

"Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds; lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled."—DEUT. xxii. 9.

THE winter is past. The beautiful springtime is once more on the earth. Beyond the walls of the city the green buds are peering forth on hedges and trees; the birds are building their nests and renewing their songs; and at length, in the brown glebe, the sower, begirt with his seed sheet, is scattering his seed.

Even in the city the signs of it are not wanting. The sky above us is freer of clouds, the air is warmer, the days are longer. A few weeks ago we returned from our day's toil by lamplight. Now we are lighted home by the sun. Thoughts of the summer which it heralds are in every heart. It is springtime! and amid all the smoke and stench of the city, amid all the dust and stir of our factories, amid all the bustle and noise of our streets, there come rippling and foaming and crooning and floating into our souls the prattle of little brooks, and the break of waves, and the hum of bees, and the healthy breath of the sea.

It is wonderful how near the spring lies to all human hearts. Harvest may pass unnoticed, but not spring. We are native to it—it is native to us. We cannot build it out. Winter is too recent—the change too palpable—the

prospect of coming summer too pleasant for that. We cannot so bury ourselves in our city life that sympathy with it shall not find us out. Birds and animals are said to repeat in their cages and wooden lairs the motions and sounds of their free estate. The poor cageling will plume itself, at the proper season, for its far flight into warmer lands—the poor watch-dog will turn round and round before settling down on his hard board, as if still forest grown.

So it is with the inhabitants of the town. We cannot forget that the green earth is our home—that we were cradled in it—that sunrise and sunset, that seed-time and harvest, that rainbow and flowers, are pictures on the walls of our dwelling-place, and that the coming or the delaying of spring is an event of interest in our lives. And so it happened during those bypast weeks of untoward weather, while the rain-clouds hung down between us and the seed-time, and the rain showers were drenching and puddling the furrows of the field, that the citizens began to look wistfully towards the sky, as if they had been farmers, and in omnibuses, in ferry-boats, on the Exchange, on the street, over the tea-table, held earnest talk with each other about sowing, and sowers, and seed-time.

And, therefore, I have thought, while these spring sympathies are in all our hearts, and on this spring day, and in this season, when at length the sower has been in every field, that a spring sermon may not be unwelcome, nor without profit to us all.

Deut. xxii. 9—"Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds; lest the fruit of thy seed which

thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled."

That we may get at the teaching for ourselves which is in these words, understand first, that the children of Israel were under a discipline which extended over every action of their lives, the most common duties were made to fit into it. Not only had the duties to be performed, but the performance of them was so to be done that a moral impression should be produced on the doer. The thing to be done—the sowing of seed, for example—had its own importance and natural results. But it was the doing it in the way prescribed by God which produced the moral result.

"Thou shalt sow thy vineyard," that was the actual duty. In sowing, "thou shalt not sow it with divers seed," that was the prescribed restraint, it was to educate the moral being of the sower.

The practice, it is said, was an imitation of an Egyptian one. After the Nile flood it was sometimes too soon, and sometimes too late, to put in particular seeds. They might rot in the ground. And to secure a harvest of some kind, other seeds which would not rot were mixed in the sowing. But in that case there was a want of trust in God, and in acting on that distrust there was the evil of disobedience to God, there was hurt to the sower himself which the want of obedience works, and thus disobedience, or the want of trust, stood up between the sower and God's blessing. And the seed which he had sown, and the fruit of his vineyard, had the moral defilement of wanting that blessing.

Understand next that that old discipline of the Jewish

people was symbolical of our own, though the external parts of it may have fallen away, the internal significance of it can never fall away. Looking, for example, into this precept about divers seed, and weighing well the moral force of it, it is not difficult to see that it was intended to train the mind of the sower to simplicity: "There is the soil, and there is one kind of seed, and these two, seed and soil, will come to healthy fruitfulness; do not go about to improve upon that; do not, out of a pagan distrust in God, or for a sure harvest, mix different sorts together; God made all seeds after their own kind, did not make them different from each other by mistake; what He has separated in nature keep separate in practice." You can see how much simpler a man would be, how much more single his heart, how much freer and more direct in all his agriculture he would be, if he walked by the rule of keeping separate what God had sundered, as compared with the man who set himself, in the place of Providence, to mix and experiment to secure the fruit, that if possible he might have a more certain harvest than God could give him.

But this spiritual result, this singleness of eye and heart, God demands from Christian as much as Jew. Although the old precept, in the exact form of it, is not repeated, the spirit of it, the thing intended by it, continues to be given forth in all stages of revelation, if you look not at the garment which the precept wears, "Sowing vineyard with divers seed," but at the precept itself, you will find it repeated with increasing emphasis in New Testament times. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other,

or else he will hold to the one and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and mammon."

What is that but a sublimer and wider and more searching repetition of my text? What is it but a most earnest warning to avoid a life which, instead of being under the dominion of one wholesome, abiding, and divine influence, goes wavering and staggering from the world to God, and from God back to the world again. I put these two verses side by side therefore. It is the same spirit which is in both, the same Lord speaks them, the same light shines from them.

"Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds."

Thou shalt not try to serve God and mammon.

"Lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard be defiled." "For either thou wilt hate the one and love the other, or else thou wilt hold to the one and despise the other." It is only necessary further to explain that the heart of man is frequently spoken of in the Bible as a vineyard, and that the principles by which that heart is regulated are represented as seeds. I mean to apply the precept with direct reference to the heart and life of man. The sowing which I shall keep before you is the sowing of principles, either good or evil, in the heart; and it only remains now that I mark out some of these great seed-times in our life, these spiritual and providential epochs when we lie open to the entrance of ruling principles, in order to illustrate and enforce the leaning of my text.

I.

I am sure you will all agree with me if I name as a great seed-time in our life that period, between youth and maturity, when the heart begins to awaken to the awful reality of eternity and the soul; that is the first conscious springtime of existence. From the innermost deeps of the being rush upward and outward new insight, new emotion, new thought, new anxiety. The mighty questions of human life, Who sent me here? Why am I here? Whither am I going? begin to agitate the bosom. The universe is all round me; but what am I in this universe? The law of God is above me; but how am I to keep that law? Behind me is the unalterable past, full of my shortcomings, my sins; but how am I to deal with that past? Before me is the tremendous future, full of blessing and cursing, of weal or woe; but how am I to front that future?

My young friend, this is your hour, your blessed springtime. It is God who has stirred up those thoughts and feelings in your hearts. His is the plough which has laid you open to new influences. His is the life, the strange unfelt before life, which is stirring you from the depths. It is the beginning of the spiritual year with you, and the momentous question you have to answer is this, What principles shall I adopt as the sources and laws of my future career?

I shall put out of view, at present, those amongst you who deliberately stifle this strange uneasiness of spirit, who in this spring season of their lives, when their being

is all hungering after God and truth, choose the evil and reject the good, and are "disobedient to the heavenly vision;" who decide to be pleasure seekers, mammon worshippers, ignoble drinkers, licentious livers—I put these out of view. I address myself to those amongst you who are not only awake to the fact that the period you are in is a deciding period, but who are anxiously inquiring after the principle to which it will be safest and truest to commit your lives.

My young friends, the nearest, most pressing thing you have got to do, is to take in seed for the future—facts, truths, principles, which will take root within you and make you fruit-bearers to God. Now the special danger you are exposed to with respect to this matter is to take a little of Christ and a little of self, as if Christ were not enough—something from Calvary and something from your own heart, as if the work on Calvary were insufficient. You will spoil your sowing if you do. "Sow not your vineyard with divers seeds." Look clear into this one fact, my young friend. It is the fact of facts for you. You are sinners, every one of you. Your being young does not alter that fact. Your necessity, what the Bible calls your justification, is to take in a provision which will give a turn to your character and make you saints. The work you have to achieve in the strength of that, is to serve God with your whole being while you are here. Now there is one provision for that change, and there is not another. There is one set of principles which will enable you to become saints, and there is not another. That provision is the fact that Jesus died on the Cross—an atonement for sin. Those

principles are the principles which naturally grow out of the faith that atonement was for you.

The ineradicable tendency of the human heart, and therefore of your hearts, is to do something which will give us a worth in the sight of God. Must I not trust a little to my own atonements? I shall offer up first a little atonement of prayer, a little atonement of churchgoing, a little atonement of Bible reading, a little atonement of intellectual activity, and then I shall have recourse to Christ's. At the peril of your lives, No! The seed which alone can enable you to be fruitful toward God, is the Gospel that Jesus died for you. The hand which God is seeking to fill with it is your faith. Reach out that hand. Take in that seed—it is the one life principle, the one secret of power and salvation—into your heart, to grow there. In this serious matter be true to the precept of my text. Be single in your choice of seed. Resist all drawings from within which would lead you to distrust the provision of God. Resist all temptation without or within, and decisively, and thankfully, and hopefully, receive into your hearts, to be your peace and your joy and your strength, this great, eternal, unchangeable verity, and only this, "Jesus died for me." The truth regarding the shed blood of that Saviour is the heaven-sent *seed* for you. "For there is none other name given under heaven by which souls can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ."

"Christ shall profit you nothing if you shall trust in Jewish ceremonies," Paul said, in the Epistle to the Galatians, to the Christian Jews of his day. He did not say it to bad people—he said it to people earnest to be good.

Their customs being appointments of God, it was very natural that difficulty should be felt in giving them up. In themselves considered there was nothing wrong within. The wrong thing was that men were putting that trust in them which God was claiming for His Son alone. Converted Jews were saying to each other, "The custom as such is necessary to salvation." They were lifting them up to the place which the death of Jesus occupied, and putting them side by side with that death. They were saying Jesus has done one great work on the Cross, and man has ordained other great work, and if we defend us well, we shall be safe. To the men who were speaking in that way, Paul said virtually, It is an attempt to sow your vineyard with divers seeds. You defile your faith in the new thing which Christ has done by giving your faith to the ceremonies of the past. You cannot be a perfect believer in these if you retain your faith in them. And without faith Christ will profit you nothing. Put family connections, or position in society, any of those things which give us worth in our own sight, in the place of those Jewish customs, and the word is for you. If your trust in Christ's death be only a half trust, if you are putting trust in your position or style of life or education, to give you worth in the sight of God, you poor, sinful young men and women, your whole sowing will be defiled, your religious strivings will come to nothing. "Sow not thy vineyard with divers seeds."

II.

Next to the spiritual springtime, to the time when the minds of young people are filled with thoughts of God, soul, eternity—when they begin to consider whether it is not their duty now to cast in their lot with the Church—is that providential epoch, in the lives of young men especially, when they have to face the world for themselves.

A real epoch in one's existence this! a real seed-time! which we cannot too frequently bring into contact with God's Word, in this commercial city, and in congregations where always some young men are on their way to be men of business, setting out in business, what is called "Commencing for yourself." It is a seed-time—a sort of spring in your existence—the beginning of your great business year. To lay yourself open to orders, to conduct affairs, to buy and sell, to have intercourse as commercial men with other commercial men, all this requires principles of guidance, seed, in short; and it depends on the principles you adopt just now, the life seeds you adopt now at the beginning of your business career, both whether your business itself shall truly prosper, and whether you as a business man shall prosper in the conducting of it. For there is a distinction here—business success in the sight of God is something more than the *success of the business. You* must succeed as well as the business. Look at that poor, withered-up, little-souled merchant or man of business—there are hundreds such in England. He is at

the head of a flourishing concern—travellers and large balances and bank credit are familiar things to him. The business is a success; but the business man, the sower of it, he is not a success—from the beginning of his career he has been a failure. Instead of being a nobler man this day, he is a meaner, baser man. Instead of growth in manliness, in human-heartedness, in benevolence, in patriotism, there has been decrease, drying up, withering away of all these. He has allowed his business to be a god to him, and he is now a slave, and nothing more. Nothing more! The man is a failure out and out.

But he need not have been a failure. Business is a noble thing, and capable of noble effects. It is a wholesome training, by which the whole outer and inner life may be advanced. A man is intended to attain to nobleness, humanity, liberality—and business will be a help. In the possibility of things both the business and the man may succeed.

If you would attain to that success, if you would have prosperity in your ledger, and prosperity in your character, if you would have accounts which all the world might know, and a character which all the world might trust; if, when you enter the market it be said of you, "There goes a man in whom dwells the fear of God," which obliquity, and sharp-shooting, and overreaching and oppression of workers cannot come near, then "do not sow your vineyard," your own business, "with divers seeds," or your sowing will be defiled.

Listen to me, you business men. There are two principles just now between which the business of this

country pendulates. There is the good old safe and just principle, "of doing to others as you would have others do to you," and there is the equally old, but not equally good principle, the false, perilous, unchristian principle, "of doing as others do, and of doing to others as others do to you."

Look well at these two principles, my business friend. This is Christ's, "Do unto others as you would have others do to you." You can buy with it, you can sell with it, you can keep your books clean with it, you can meet your losses with it, you can open new pathways of trade with it, you can make gain with it, you can manage servants with it, you can serve yourself with it, you can rule factories with it, you can employ outdoor labour with it, you can freight ships with it, you can grow rich with it, you can eat cheerfully with it, you can sleep soundly with it; you can tell your wife and children all the road it leads you, with it; you can get God's blessing on your business with it, and God's blessing on your own soul.

And this is the world's principle; this is the principle of the great commercial world, in which, I suppose, Liverpool has its commercial life, "Do as others do; do unto others as others do unto you." A great principle, too, in its way! You can do many things by the power of it. You can compete with it, you can overreach your neighbours with it, you can master your servants with it, you can stifle by means of it the sound of the cry of their hardships in your ears, "Do unto others as others do." Others trample their workers down, so may I; others prison them up in unwholesome rooms, so may I; others pocket the unrighteous gains, so may I; others

give the harsh word, and so may I; others do the deceitful thing, and so may I; others sell the unworthy article, and so may I; others have made riches by iniquity, and so may I. Ah! yet, my friend, you can ride in your coach, and you can have your gay parties in winter, and you can have your summer jaunts and your summer retreats, but you cannot build up your character in the sight of God, you cannot attain in the exercise of this principle to nobleness or manliness, or brotherhood, or uprightness. On your books, on your work-places, on your transactions, on your luxuries, on your gains, you cannot get one solitary gleam of the blessing of God.

And no more can you obtain that blessing by trying to compromise the matter, to manage your business by the world's principle, and your public and domestic life. All baseness and unfairness in the shop, in the counting-house, among workers and customers, and all prayers and pious speeches on the platform or at the fireside! it is an unholy alliance!—too rife in the land at present!—it is defiling the religious character of our country, and causing our Sabbath-keeping and church-going to be a byeword among men.

Oh, my young business-men, put that unseemly alliance far from you. Be single-hearted, single-eyed—not one thing in business, another thing at home. If you would flee from an old age defiled by unrighteous ways; if you would attain to a prosperity which God may acknowledge, say this way, repeat and practise to-morrow, "From this time forth, in my business-field, with my partners, with my customers, with my workers, if I am a servant with my fellow-servants; in all my transactions, I shall

struggle no longer between the divers principles, but abide by the one divine principle, and "Do unto others as I would have others do unto me."

III.

One more application of my text. You know yourselves and feel it to be an overlook, if I were not to apply it to parental work. I address myself to parents present. Fresh as the ploughed fallow field lies the heart of a child, all-open, all-receptive, lengthening on, under your sole authority, whole years of springtime.

Ah! ye parents, now is your power! Now, while those hearts are soft as soil. Now, before evil habits come in and deface them. Now, before cares grow up to choke them. And the seeds you have to sow, they are looks, acts, thoughts, words.

This old precept has fresh, new lessons for you. It offers you first this course, to be uniform in the principles with which your conduct is moulded. It does not need the Bible to tell you that an ill-regulated mixture of austerity and fondness is bad. To-day, all indulgence —to-morrow, all severity. For romping, on one day, the laugh and the sweatmeat—for the same romping, next day, the frown and the beating.

"Do not sow your vineyard with divers seeds."

This precept teaches parents to be uniform in the view they take of their children's relation to God. If you waver respecting this, you are sure to go wrong. If, generally, you think of them as merely inhabitants of the earth, and only at rare times—perhaps, on Sabbath days—

as subjects of eternity; if sometimes you think of them as exclusively your own, yours to bring joy and good and honour to you; and only occasionally as God's—to bring homage and service and glory to *Him*, you are sure to err.

"Do not sow your vineyard with divers seeds."

Keep before you, with a firm clear grasp, this fact, that these children are God's more than yours, that they are yours only because they are His gift to you—this precept teaches parents to be uniform in the view they take of their children's duties. "Children are God's heritage," as the Bible finely says, and you are His steward over this heritage. For what end, do you think, has God placed you over these children? What fruit does He expect from your stewardship over them? That they will be trained up for some position on this earth, and no more? That you will give them some merely material trade? Make them tradesmen, or shopkeepers, or doctors, or ministers merely? Good is labour—honourable is a trade or a profession; but there is more than that. God has other and higher ends for His heritage. He wishes them, in whatever outward sphere they may enter, to be witnesses for Him upon the earth. He will not be satisfied if they grow up only for trade or for earthly gain. Far less if they grow up to the evils of earth, worldliness, unrighteousness, unholiness, vanity, sin. He wants them to grow up to Him, to be images of Him, children to Him. He looks for fruit of godliness, fruit of truth, fruit of holiness, fruit of heaven; and you, steward of God, to sow this fruit. You fathers and mothers, of those heaven-sent seed-fields, you on whose

teaching and training so much depends, will you sow with divers seeds, and persevere in the insane endeavour to train them up, as if they were partly the children of the world and partly the children of God? I know your temptation—how powerful it is. The world is a reality, you say. It has a real hold of us. It can avenge our neglect of it. Do not be afraid of the world. God, to whom your child belongs, is stronger than the world. Seek first the kingdom of heaven for your children, and God will give them all they need in this world. It is difficult to convince the blind. "My child must succeed in the world," you say for your child. Talent, substance, splendour of earth, that is the world you would conquer. It is the old temptation of the pride of life. "Lord, here are my John and my James, let them sit nearest You in the kingdom." You would cultivate that boy's intellect—you would see him famous, powerful, above his fellows. You would cultivate that daughter's body—you would see her beautiful, sought after, settled well. You would not deliberately wish to see your children irreligious. But, on the other hand, you object to so much religion as might spoil their worldly prospects. You would be the last to consciously object that they be like Jesus; in a sort of abstract way, you even wish that wish. But then you may wish another wish. You may wish even more heartily that they be *like other children—other people's children.* Not worse, but in religion not better than they. Ah! friend, that is the dangerous temptation. "Sow not thy vineyard with divers seeds." Your children are His heritage; train them up in the nurture and admonition of

the Lord, that they may give glory to Him in their future lives.

Lastly, this precept teaches that parents should uniformly inculcate right principles in their children. It will not do to use a good principle to-day, and then an indifferent or bad one to-morrow. The principles you communicate must be always the same, and always good. There is one great principle, for example, a broad, powerful principle, the principle that *God is over all*. That is true seed for your vineyard. That will make your child upright, humble, reverent. But there is another principle, a low, mean, worldly principle, the principle that the eye of the world *is over all*, the principle of "the fear of the folk;" if that, too, is dropped into the precious soil, if you take a little of the one, and a little of the other, and try to mix them in your sowing, to give your children the advantage of both, and to prepare them for the harvest which God demands, and for the future before themselves, in this way you are just sowing your vineyard with divers seeds, and your sowing must be defiled. Christian parents, settle first in your heart, by the light of God's Word, what is of God, and what is of the world in the principles you use, and then you will need no teacher to say to you, "Waver not. Falter not in the use of the true. Sow not the hearts of your children with divers seed."

Great is faith in making parents great. Truth in the principles I have referred to—in the principle that God is over all—in the principle that your children belong to Him—in the principle that you are His steward to minister good to them—would scatter from your hands

all seeds of earth, and make you sowers of His seed of truth, and righteousness, and love, and life.

I have, in my illustrations of this precept, merely given two or three of the separate epochs of life, which may be conceived of as seed-times. I do not need to tell you that life itself, as it lies wide and high before you, is all a seed-time. Our earth life is the spring: eternity is the harvest. It is applicable to the field of polity, to the field of the Church. And I would ask you to bring this thought close to all the thoughts I may have suggested, and dwell upon it, and understand it, for the seed-time will soon be ended. The hand of the sower will soon be stiff, and the misused seed be withdrawn into the garner of God.

It is the sum of all I have said, to insist that you all decide for God, and live to God. This vain strife, to serve God and the world, will come to naught. It only can hurt the life. Blessing and life lie in the sower. Those hearts which are God's, and those homes which are God's, and this country which is God's, and those businesses which are God's, and this Church which is God's, and those children, and all the interests and epochs and actions of those lives which are God's. With God's seed, with His only, with His always, with Him for this life, with Him for the life to come, you cannot serve God and mammon.

In closing this spring sermon, let me just say one more word about the evil result from which you here are warned; from life sowing in the Book of God there are two serious results pointed out. These is one result—a very awful one—because it is one part of your life

revealing the evil which was done in another. It is the result when the sowing is all of one kind that the reaping is of the same thing. Your sin will come up to light in the judgment. Hypocrisy if you sowed it, fraud if you sowed it, garners for God if you sowed for God—that and no other, that and no lower, you will reap. If there be any change, it is a change for the worse; it is the evil developed. You sow the wind, and you reap the whirlwind.

But it is not this result, however solemn, from which I have been warning you to-day. It is the other, no less fateful one, because it implies the hurt of actual good—the loss of all your labour—that the sowing of divers seed will bring ruin to all your sowing. There may be the sowing of good. There may be large, diligent sources of good; it does not avert the evil if you are not loyal to the good. If you do not believe in it, and commit your way to it; if you sow in with the good, thinking the good to be indifferent, what is evil, or even what is indifferent, then inasmuch as you have not trusted in good, the good will not grow up good. But over all your vineyard will grow up a mingled and defiled harvest, on which God's blessing cannot descend.

"Sow not with divers seeds, lest the fruit of the seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled."

SEED-TIME AND HARVEST.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."—PSALM cxxvi. 5, 6.

THE truth which shines from these words is, that there is a sorrow which is crowned with joy,—that there are joys which can only be reached by the way of sorrow. There is a seed-time of weeping—a reaping-time of laughter; a sorrow-laden spring—a joy-crowned harvest.

It is one of Nature's parables—old, yet ever new, speaking to us with its rich fresh voice of the mystery of life. And this is a time to read this parable, and search out and lay to heart its many-coloured meanings. The actual harvest is still upon the earth; the reapers have been in among the ripe grain; the barns are open to receive it home; and, after a weary waiting, the songs of the harvest home are beginning to be sung.

What a joyful time the harvest is! Even this year, we have only to think of a year without a harvest, or of a famine-smitten land, to see how much good is brought to us. Between the saddest, wettest harvest we can have, and no harvest, there is such a distance, that the very anxieties, the very labours of the year, severe and heavy though they may have been—just because they have been mixed with hope—have not been without

their edges of joy. The clouds returned after the rain, but hope remained. And I may therefore say of all harvest-time, it is a time of joy—a time of labouring with thankful hearts—a time of gathering in and storing up the food which the kind Father has prepared for us.

How many thoughts enter into the nature of harvest-joy! It is a human work brought to completion—that is a joy. It is human labour returning its fruits—there is joy in that. It is human hope reaching its fulfilment—that, also, is joy. It is want driven from the door. It is food for man and beast—that is fulness of joy. And I think these joys shall strike down into thoughtful hearts, if the season were once fairly over, with an intenser stroke, from the very dreariness of the days in which the harvest has had to be gathered.

As men who have seen some precious thing slipping from their hand into the sea, and caught it before it sank, and ever afterwards valued it at a double price, so shall grateful men value the harvest, which has had to be snatched, in blinks of sunlight, from the wasting rains. And so, in the end, there shall still be a time of joy.

But in the happiest harvest time, the joy of the ingathering is one which has had to be reached by a path of sorrow. Before the harvest was the hard toil amid sweltering summer-heats—the still harder toil beneath the drenchings and colds of spring. Field work in the dead of winter, in the raw wet months of early spring, can be a joy to none. It implies self-denial, endurance, sacrifice, hardship, sorrow. But it is a wholesome sorrow

—a sorrow leading to a joy. Blessed hardships of spring! Happy fruits of these hardships in harvest! The husbandmen go forth weeping, bearing the precious seed, but they come again rejoicing, bringing their yet more precious sheaves. And so, from year to year, the beneficent earth, and man labouring on its seedfields, utter their joint parable; and from generation to generation, the parable lays open to us anew deeps of spiritual truth.

And *first* of all, it lays open to us the great law of spiritual life, the law, I might say, of all life, that it is through tribulation we enter into the joy of the kingdom. God means us to reap in joy, but first we must sow in tears.

We find the law at work in the heights and in the deeps, in the homeliest sphere in which the humble Christian has to work out his salvation; and in the high movements, struggles, developments, and whole history of the Church. And we find it in the mystery of the Cross, where the Saviour died for the world.

It is a law for the life of man on the earth, and for the Lord of the earth. It binds Master and servant, His work and ours. For human and Divine conquest, the path is the common path of suffering. There is first the seed-time of sorrow, and only after the harvest of joy. See, for example, how this law meets us at the very threshold of Christian life. Great though the blessedness to which Christ invites us is, the beginnings of His life in the soul come to us amid tears. Then for the first time we see the mystery of the Cross; and

what strikes us, in what we see, is the spectacle of a Saviour there for us. We see the wounds in His body—but behind these the wounds in ourselves, for the healing of which He died. No soul ever truly opens its eye on these facts who does not weep. Sharp and into the very heart goes the pang: "It is I who have crucified the Lord!" But it is a blessed weeping—it is a weeping that leads to joy. We fall, but it is only to rise. We fall from pride, and self, and sin, but it is to be exalted in the righteousness of Christ. We are afraid, thinking of our iniquities; but we are made glad because of His mercy. Through our tribulation we pass into the kingdom, which is forgiveness, and peace, and joy. We sow in tears, but, by the Lord's grace, we all our life thereafter reap in joy.

Again, we find the same law at work in the life of the Church. If you look for a moment at the future of the Church, the glimpse we obtain is of a glory which there is no language fully to describe. But there is not one step forward to that glory which is not through tears. It is by sacrifices, by agonies, by the endurance of persecutions, by the bearing of heavy burdens, by fastings, by prayers, that the glory is approached. The Church sows in tears, but it reaps in joy.

And so also in the life of the Church's Head. You know in what terms the Bible describes the joy of Christ: "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." It is Christ who is to be satisfied. Think of the *capacity of desire* which is in Christ. Think how, further than human, further than angelic desire, this must extend! Think of the depth, and purity, and great-

ness of His desires! Think of the things fitted to meet them, and fill them, and be a satisfaction to Him! The redemption of the world must enter into the ingredients of the joy that will satisfy Him! The glorifying of His Father must form part of it! And it is all to come to pass! His Father shall be glorified in the most complete and perfect way. Christ shall Himself leap up, out of the depths of sin in which He found us, a people redeemed from sin, and shall present them to that Father. There shall be the smile of the Father's countenance resting on all His work, and on all the multitude of spiritual life redeemed from the destroyer. All that, and more, comes to view in the satisfaction with which Christ is to be satisfied. Yet to that satisfaction, even He, like the humblest of His followers, had to travel by sorrows. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross!"

If there had not been the sowing in Gethsemane, and on Calvary, the after-joy could never have been a hope for His heart. Into the kingdom of His joy He, too, passes through tribulation. He went forth weeping—a man of sorrows—smitten, afflicted: He went forth carrying His precious burden—the seed of the world's life, His life, and death, and resurrection—His truth, and love, and holiness. I might say, He went forth offering Himself as seed. For He was Himself the seed out of which redemption was to spring for men. And for this seed, as for the seed of the commonest herb that grows, He recognised and honoured the law I am illustrating. "Except a corn of wheat die, it abideth alone." Himself was the corn of wheat. He submitted to death. He

went forth on His sublime enterprise—the work of redemption—sowing the world's heart with the blood of His own. And so, passing through tribulation towards the kingdom He came to establish.

And in consequence, the *certainty* of His future joy! In consequence, the *strength* and *multitude* of the prophecies of His glory on the time of His return to earth! He suffered—He shall therefore reign: He was humbled—He shall therefore be exalted: He sowed in tears—He shall reap in joy.

In the *second* place, we may learn from this parable, that the present sufferings of Christ's people are a preparation for Christ's after-joy. For Christ is sower as well as seed. And, in a sense, we are the seed He sows.

In that great well of joy, which shall open in the heart of Christ, and overflow upon His people at the second coming, the resurrection of His people shall have an important place. That great joy lies forward for Christ in the future. He who, as the risen Christ, has been a joy to the people, shall rejoice in them as His risen saints. We are accustomed to think of the joys of the resurrection as joys confined to Christ's people. But they must be joys to Christ before they can be joys to us. He will look upon that immeasurable mass of redeemed existence. He will see the new beauties, the glad recognitions, the happy embraces, the new experiences of that time.

It will be a great harvest spectacle—a real harvest to Him. The seed sown in the grave has come up. The

Lord of the harvest rejoices. But here, also, there would be no joy, if there had been no previous sorrow. The heart of Christ could never be a well of joy among the joys of His people that day, if it had not previously been a well of sorrow among their griefs. It is not the bereaved on earth only who weep for the Christian dead. Christ is smitten with all the pangs which the bereaved can feel. Wonderful, my friends, is the sympathy of Christ. We do not realise it enough—do not enough draw comfort from it. He sends the affliction which bows the strong form into dust. He also weeps with those who weep when that strength is wasting away. He appoints the time when the servant must leave the work place. He also mourns over the loss to the family or the Church. He does not afflict willingly. Dear—costly to Him, as to us, is the death of a saint. Not a pang shoots through the frame of the sick but it is felt in His heart. Not a blank is made by death in the Church but He sorrows over it. Not a tear is shed at the open grave but He sheds a sister tear. Not a home is made desolate but all the desolation is felt by Him. That is His sorrow—His weeping with us when we weep. And oh, my friends! oh, my grieving and bereaved friends! He could avoid all that sorrow. He could shelter us from all those pangs. He could leave us without trials, without crosses, without bereavements, and Himself without the opportunity of weeping with us when we weep. But He loves us too truly. He is too faithful in training us. He knows our need of suffering and of sorrow: knows that only so can we, who are left, learn the obedience of sons; and only so, can those for

whom, like Himself, it is expedient that they go away, be instruments of holiness to the dear ones who are left behind. And so, over all lands, and from generation to generation, coming daily nearer to some by the approaches of slow disease—coming suddenly to others like a spoiler in the night, the Lord goes forth from the homes of His people with His precious seed. He, the awful Sower, carrying to their graves—to the precious seed-field which our fathers on this account named "God's acre"—the dead bodies of the saints, goes forth weeping! But it is only for a time, only to come back again rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him. Oh, happy retribution! Blessed and ever blessed harvest-time of the world! Best, and richest, and most enduring ingathering! Harvest home of harvest homes, whose songs shall be sung by angels! The Lord shall come again—"with *all* His saints." "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints." And in that day, shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

I notice, *finally*, that times of affliction are seed-times for Christ's people.

It can be no wonder, after what we have seen, if suffering enters into the lot of the Christian. The Lord travels to His joys by sorrow. Shall the servant be greater than his Lord? Count it not strange if you are tried. For you as for Him, trial is the path to gladness. And therefore lay this other most important truth

to heart, that times of affliction are seed-times to your own soul.

When God afflicts you, He does not merely send you out into the shadow. He fills your bosom with seed, and gives you a spring-time to sow it. Wrapt up in your afflictions come new glimpses of God's love, new experiences of His mercy, new realisings of His help. You are made to feel your need of God more, more thrown in upon your own weakness, more thrown out upon His strength. Life reveals new features to you. The Cross puts on more sacredness for you. Death and resurrection, and immortality and heaven, and Christ's spirit and righteousness, and saintship and suffering, come to you as new revelations, with aspects you have never seen, kindling their stars in your night of sorrow. New experiences, new thoughts, new emotions, are the seed with which God has filled your bosom, which He has sent you forth weeping to sow.

Oh, you afflicted ones! Do you not already begin to see, that there are things we learn in sorrow which could not otherwise be learned? Precious truths, which are for the enriching and fructifying of our lives! Do not shut your eyes to the fact. This is a most real spring-time. And you are most real sowers. And see that you search out the precious things which God is sending in your affliction, and sow them in your souls. If ye suffer with Him, ye shall also reign with Him. If you are faithful in sowing the seed, He will be faithful in bringing the harvest.

And I pray you all, whatever your circumstances at present may be, to be seekers and receivers of the seed

with which Christ would sow your souls. That seed will be your strength when trial comes. It is your strength for the daily burdens and the wear and tear of life. Oh, blessed hour in the life of any soul when that seed is first received! It is the hitherto empty soul receiving its birth-seed from the hand of God. It is the first real view—the first real grasp and possession of Christ, as the Saviour of the soul. Christ the Saviour from sin! Christ's blood, the cleansing from sin! Christ's life, the victory over sin! Christ's spirit, the help against sin! Christ's inheritance, the inheritance of the redeemed sinner! That is the precious seed bestowed on young converts in that high hour. Oh! memorable birthtime—spring of the eternal year in the soul—when the great truths, which are the priceless seed of redemption—when Christ's life, His death, His resurrection; and when Christ Himself, as Saviour, King, and Elder Brother, become certainties, and possessions, and very portions of one's soul!

Oh! young hearts, who still shrink from this sowing; oh, fond hearts, who fancy that the pleasures of youth are better seed for the soul than Christ! oh, hearts of young men and women, to whom the vain things around you in the world are appealing with so undeserved success; you to whom, by so many messengers, comes the old falsehood, that life is for pleasure only; who have never learned that a soul who lives in pleasure is dead while it lives—do not put away the precious seed which Christ is holding out to you in His wounded hands! Receive it, although to your sorrow and humbling at the first. It is a seed you must sow with tears. But to

every soul who soweth, there shall come a joyful and enduring harvest.

We sow in tears ; but let us keep
  Our faith in Christ, and trust Him still ;
Yonder our harvest we shall reap,
  Where gladness every heart shall fill.

THE SEVEN LAST WORDS.

MATT. xxvii. 35–50; LUKE xxiii. 39–46; JOHN xix. 25–30.

I INVITE you this morning to enter with me into the most sacred sanctuary of suffering this world has ever known. By the words which our dying Lord uttered on the cross we shall be admitted into the very Holy of Holies in the great temple of sorrow. Seven times the Divine Sufferer broke silence. Seven times, by His words, He revealed the thoughts and feelings which were working in the loving spirit within. It is to the study of these words I invite you.

With what pathetic interest and iteration we go over the last words of a beloved friend! Is there any friend whose last words can be so well worth our study as Christ's? As flashes of lightning on a darkened sky tell out the secrets of light, so do these words, uttered in the shadow of death, tell out the secrets of the life of Christ.

I.

Most tender, most characteristic, was the first of these words. It was a prayer for the men who were putting Him to death: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." Here truly was an example, the grandest we can ever know, of the ruling passion strong in death.

The ruling passion with Christ was mercy; and this

first word was the expression of that. He was still in the hands of the Roman soldiers. To these men it was nothing that they had this task to do. They had done it on others many a time before. They laid rough hands on Him. They stripped Him. They laid Him on the cross. They drove the terrible nails into His living, sensitive flesh. They heaved up the wood with its awful burden. They dropped it into the pit prepared for it. And then, without one thought of pity, in the face of the unspeakable agony and deepening shadow of death above them, they sat down to play dice for the Sufferer's clothes.

Once speaking as a teacher, the Lord said to the disciples, "Pray for them who despitefully use you." He is here true to His teaching. He acts as He taught His disciples to act. He prayed for the men who despitefully used Him.

It is very significant that this first of the words should be a prayer. He reveals to us thereby the resource which the child of God has in what may seem the very hour of defeat. Although He was shut in and straitened by the malice of His enemies, His Father was not straitened. Out of the depths He cried to Him. He appealed to Him in whom His help stood, and straightway He was strong in the strength of God.

"Father, forgive them," He cried. His enemies had thrust Him out of their fellowship, and out of His place in the nation, and now these ministers of their malice were thrusting Him out of life itself. They were not men to listen to His words, or to be influenced by His sufferings; but He brought them under His influence

by prayer. He pled with God for them. In the very moment of their cruelty He called down a blessing on their head: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." It was so like the Saviour; it was so true to the pitifulness of His heart, to bring into His prayer this mitigation of their cruelty.

How often has this word been a solace to the people of God! Have we not felt it so ourselves, when our spirits have been pressed down or fretted by the thought of our own sins, or by the unjust judgments and cruel misinterpretations of our fellow-men? Have we not been made glad, and glad with an exceeding joy, that in the end we are to be judged, not by men, but by that gracious, considerate, and loving Lord, who found a reason for mercy to His tormentors in their ignorance: "Forgive them; they know not what they do"?

It adds to the significance and impressiveness of this prayer that it was the first act of our Lord as the great intercessor of His people. At the very first touch of the shadow which was to hide Him from our view, our great High Priest lifted up the cry that from that moment was to rise for ever from His lips for mercy and pardon to a lost world. So merciful is the High Priest of our profession—so merciful the heart that reveals the heart of God.

He is interceding still for souls far from God, for lost souls, for souls insensate and cruel, for heathen races, for hearts that are enmity against God; His prayer springs up like a spirit of love from the well of love in the heart. And still it is this first prayer of the cross, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

II.

Uttering the first word, He spoke as the Great High Priest. The second word takes us into the presence of a King. The rulers put a superscription over Him: "This is the King of the Jews." He was more than that. In His second word He spoke as the King of Glory. "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

Recall the circumstances. He is on a cross: between two thieves, Himself counted worthy of death. Beneath Him a heartless, mocking crowd, filling the air with the murmur, "If He be the Christ, let Him save Himself." In these circumstances, each of which seemed to tell of defeat, this Sufferer was as one who had kingdoms to give away. "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." The gracious, loving word was spoken to one of the two sufferers by His side. This man, touched by what he had seen in the bearing of Jesus, touched also, it may be, by the prayer for His enemies, which he may have heard, turned with his whole heart to the Lord. Through the suffering and the shame He beheld the reality. By the anointing of the Holy Spirit, he saw a Saviour in his fellow-sufferer. And his broken heart welled out in the cry—"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

Can you imagine what this cry, uttered when it was, must have been to Christ? It was consolation from God. It was His Father coming near to Him with a draught of joy. Amid the mocking words of the crowd, like a spring in some desert, rose this passionate appeal

of His fellow-sufferer. The cry of a soul in distress: the utterance of a heart that believed in Christ—"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

Can you sound the depth of the faith from which this prayer arose? Never rose faith higher among the sons of men than this of the poor malefactor. As far as appearance went, it was prayer to a mere man nailed on a cross—a man condemned, helpless, dying. Yet the boon he asked for was one which could only be granted by the power and mercy of God: "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom:" poor, lone, lost one though he was, he beheld the Messiah—he beheld God—in the Sufferer by his side.

And yet, great though his faith was, he did not know all the reach of it, nor the full meaning of what he asked. "*When* Thou comest into Thy kingdom," he said. He is looking into some dim far future. He is thinking of a time when the troubles of that day shall have passed; when he, the poor petitioner, shall perhaps be blotted out of human memory—when that day dawns, and the day of the Messiah's enemies shall be for ever past, and the day of His glory shall have come: then—then—"Remember Thou this poor sin-laden sufferer: cast a pitying, loving thought back on me then. In that day remember me." That was the prayer. Something like that was the reach of it. But the regal answer—Christ's answers being always greater than sinners' prayers—was this: "To-day—to-day—this very day of thy shame and suffering—thou shalt be with Me in paradise." The Cross has suddenly become a throne. A King speaks. He speaks by His act to all

time. It is a prophecy and picture of the fortunes of the cause. Its march shall be from death to life, from weakness to strength, from shame to glory. Thus in the very region of the dead springs up, blooms, and fructifies the Tree of Life.

III.

The third word was spoken to His mother and to John. It is a word of unutterable tenderness. It brings out the deep filial love of Christ. Mother love had brought Mary to the Cross. A mother's faith, a mother's courage, had sustained her under the terrible spectacle. From long ago she was familiar with the words: *A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.* The piercing of that sword was present that day. But Christ's care was brooding over her. Not dwelling on His own sufferings, thinking, as His manner ever had been, on the sufferings of others, His love searched out this dear form amid the group at the foot of the Cross. And that other form, dear to Him too, who had been wont to lean on His breast. And then, speaking as the Master of the Christian household, He said, "Woman, behold thy son: Son, behold thy mother." That was all so far as words went. But it was, at the same time, the revelation of the new law in the family circle of Christ. It was Christ putting Himself in the life, and sorrow, and widowhood, and childlessness of Mary, and saying to His disciple, Look on this dear form as thy mother, and love and serve Me in loving and serving her. And it was in like manner, putting Himself in John, in John's

fidelity, in John's sympathetic nature, and saying to Mary, *My* help and sympathy as a son shall be around you, but its home—its fountain henceforth—shall be My beloved John.

If men would but turn from the dreams of an earthly socialism, and consider the meaning of this brief word to John and Mary: it is the revelation of the law of the kingdom that is to be—it is the law of the true unity and wellbeing of the race. It is the weak turning to the strong, because they see Christ in their strength—it is the strong helping the weak, because they see Christ in their weakness; Christ in the poor, Christ in the rich; Christ in the widow, Christ in the helper of the widow; Christ the underlying, all perfect, all helpful, all inspiring, uniting principle in social life. When this shall be felt and acted on, the prophecy which was in these words to John and Mary shall be fulfilled, and the kingdom of God shall have come among men.

IV.

We come next to the words which touch and express His work as an atoning sacrifice. And listening to this, we find ourselves standing on the brink of the awful deep into which for our sakes He descended.

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Three hours of His agonising suffering had now passed slowly on, the shadow of death was darkening over His body, the answering shadow in nature was darkening over the sky. It was out of this twofold darkness this awful cry arose. My God, My God, why hast Thou

forsaken Me? The Lord was quoting words from the twenty-second Psalm—that is a Messianic Psalm, a portraiture of the Christ. And in His sufferings He recalled it, took it to Himself, put Himself to speak into the heart of it and said, Why hast Thou forsaken ME?

In part it was the old mystery described in Job—the mystery of righteousness suffering. Why all these waves of sorrow upon me? Why am I broken by those terrible billows? But there was more than that, there was the mystery of the Divine conduct. Why hast THOU forsaken Me, Thou the all righteous, the Almighty?

My God, my God—Thou art still My God—why hast THOU forsaken Me? Every syllable tells in the utterance. Why hast Thou FORSAKEN Me? To be forsaken of God. Do you know what that is? It is to be cast out of His presence. It is to be cast into a darkness in which the light of His countenance can no longer be seen. It is to be in those circumstances which are the essence and reality of hell.

For one awful moment of unspeakable anguish He found Himself without the presence of the light of that countenance which had been with Him from His earliest days. He was in a land not inhabited, deserted, drear, without sign, or smile, or light of God. The land of outer darkness, so deep He had to descend to taste death for us, so deep He had to bare His soul, to know and carry all the woe of the sin-laden world He came to save. It was out of that darkness the cry arose, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." Yet see this great mystery of filial faith through the darkness—His soul still clings to

God. It is My God, My God—to whom the pathetic, the awful cry ascends.

V.

In the fifth word we touch His sufferings on the side in which He is kin to ourselves—"I thirst." It was the natural effect of His sufferings; one of the results of the pain of dying by the cross was, an awful thirst. It is the shortest of His words—the parched lips can hardly utter it. His strength is ebbing, His scourging, the piercing of the nails, the dreadful agony of hanging suspended by these, the long hunger, the fever raging through His blood; these cause this result, this insistant cry of His body, I thirst.

Some have asked, whether it was the cry of bodily thirst alone; was there not in the background the working of spiritual thirst? Isaiah had said, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Was not this the craving of a soul in travail? I will not dare to say that there was *not* that spiritual thirst. But it is not that which impresses me when I think of the words. It is oneness with my human nature. Certainly, first of all, it was the physical, human nature agony of simple thirst. It was the man Jesus manifesting His oneness with us: revealing Himself to be flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, the Son of man, our Brother.

VI.

Now we are coming to the close. Speaking the sixth word, our Lord was realising that His sufferings were nearly over, His task was done.

How few can speak their words more humanless. Of how many purposes at the end are they only broken fragments! mere beginnings: mere intentions: nothing finished. But with Christ it is all the other way. "It is finished," He could say. The divine work He had come to do was done. The work of God's Son—of man's Saviour. It is finished. He had fulfilled the prophecies. He had ended His conflict with death. His mission as a teacher was finished. His sacrifice as an atonement for sin was complete. The old dispensation was ended.

"'Tis finished—the Messiah dies for sins, but not His own.
The great redemption is complete, and Satan's power o'erthrown.

'Tis finished—all His groans are past; His blood, His pain, His toils
Have fully vanquished our foes, and crowned Him with their spoils.

'Tis finished—legal worship ends, and gospel ages run;
All old things now are past away, and a new world begun."

VII.

And so at last we are at the close. A moment more and the silence of death will have fallen. It is during that moment the sublime last of the last words is spoken: "Father, into Thy hand I commend My spirit." Word for word it is an utterance from one of the psalms. What He was doing now had been done by the children of God from the beginning. At the last hour, when all else was dark about them, the fact that God was their Father was not dark—when the fastenings which bound them to the earth were being loosed, those that bound them to God remained. Into God's hand from of old sufferers had commended their spirits. Into God's hand also this Sufferer commended His spirit.

It was but a little while, and He was crying, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The weight of the world's woe was upon His spirit then—the pressure of the one terrible moment of outer darkness. But He is in the bright shining of His Father's presence now. Now, through the darkness, faith springs forward towards the outstretched arms of God. Now, though the waves of this tempest make a roaring, faith hears the footfalls of a God near at hand. O unseen Father! O Father, pressing toward me through the darkness! into Thy hand I commend My spirit.

He is going home. He is going to be in the bosom of the Love from whence He came. He is going to the Father—to the fellowship dear to Him—to the heart that had understood His thoughts afar off—to the God who never failed Him in His need—to the King who will yet justify the Life that is deepened into the grave. For us this last word is a revelation of the unseen world. In the 23rd Psalm it is said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." Christ was in the presence of His enemies, and here is the table which His Father has prepared for Him. His Father's presence is the food on that table, His Father's care and love. The malice of enemies brought Him to the Cross—brought Him unto the valley of the shadow; but God was there, ready to bless Him. Already He had put a crown of honour upon Him—He had given Him the soul of the penitent thief. Now He gave Him a still grander crown

—Himself. It is the victory over death these notes we hear in these words; it is a foregleam of our immortality. All is not over when the life of the body ebbs—*then* the life of the spirit starts on a new career.

Let us hold our feast this morning amid the echoes of those last words. And you, who know the love which those cries expressed, and have rested your highest interests on it, and gave yourselves to God in the power of it, hear once more the accents of Him you have learned to believe in and follow, and see once more the greatness, the graciousness of this Saviour. See again how sincere His love for you is, and how true and abiding His yearning that you should possess all that He possesses, be all that He is, and at last dwell where He dwells.

Thus is the Saviour prepared for us by God. On the Cross He finished the great work of atoning for sin; from the Cross He offers free pardon, life, immortality, bliss. By lips parched with thirst *for* us, He makes this everlasting appeal *to* us: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

AT THE SEPULCHRE.

AN EASTER SERMON.

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."—JOHN xx. 17.

IT was very natural, in the dim morning light, in the place she stood, with a mind set on the belief that He was dead, and with eyes blinded by tears, that Mary should have mistaken the risen Lord for the keeper of the garden.

Very natural, too, that she should say, building on the thought which then flashed into her mind, "Sir, if *thou* have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

But most of all, it was natural, when the well-remembered voice sounded in her ear, and she heard the Lord calling her by her name, that she should rush forward to embrace Him, and give some expression to her joy and thankfulness at this first moment of His appearance after death.

And yet, all natural though it seems to us, there was something in her intention or salutation which the Lord could not receive. Some misapprehension, some error of imagination, some wrong inference, some misappropriateness or untimeliness of worship, which the Lord would

not suffer her to embody as she wished. "Touch Me not," He said, "for I am not yet ascended to My Father."

It has always been a wonder why the Lord refused this homage, and it is only a guess we can offer in the way of explaining it.

Is it possible that she mistook this unexpected wonder —this resurrection from the dead—for the second coming of which He had so often spoken? Thoughts of that second coming might well spring up in her soul that morning. She had been instructed in the great hope by the Lord Himself. Her spiritual eye had no doubt often kindled as, in the light of His teaching, she bent its glance onward into that resplendent future. And she knew, come when it might, that the beginning of it would be the return of the Lord from beyond the grave. And now, in the strange and startling circumstances in which she is placed, the words He had spoken, the parables He had told, might flash back into her memory, and cause an unexpected glory to break upon her soul. Is this the beginning of the kingdom which these parables foretold? Is this the return from "the far country"? Was this the way of which prophets and seers had spoken, when the throne of David should be filled by David's greater Son? And were the new heaven and the new earth, in which righteousness was to dwell, about to appear?

If these, or anything kindred to these, were her thoughts, it was only natural that she should seek to salute the Bringer and Lord of the new time! The Messiah had triumphed over His enemies, and come to

reign. She would triumph in His triumph. She would rejoice in His joy. Her faith, her love, her whole spiritual life would go out towards Him in worship. As naturally as a child runs forward to embrace a returning parent, she rushes to embrace her returning King. She will kneel and clasp those knees which hung upon the Cross. She will bathe those feet with tears which had been pierced with nails. She will anoint them with the kisses and precious fervour of her faith.

How gently, if this was her mistake, does the Lord forbid her homage! How tenderly He implies correction of it by what He says. You can see through the words the forward movement of the one, and the delicate repulse of the other, "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father." He puts that "Not yet" between Himself and her homage. "Not yet, Mary." The time for homage of the kind you are offering is "not yet." "I am not yet ascended to My Father." Other tasks demand her service. There are breaking hearts to be gladdened. There are wildered spirits to be led back to hope. Mary shall be a witness to these of the Resurrection, and her Lord's messenger to the disciples—"Go to My brethren, and say," *I have fulfilled My word.* Say to them, "I ascend to My Father, and your Father; to My God, and your God."

It was morning when these words were uttered. Human life was beginning to throb along another path of sunlight. But these words were a brighter dawn. Next to the message of the herald angels these are the hopefullest words ever uttered on this earth. He that

was dead is alive again. "I ascend to My Father, and your Father." The soul of the Great Substitute has not been left in Hades, neither has the Father suffered His Holy One to see corruption. The Christ is risen! Death has no more dominion over Him. Joy for the sons of men! the power of death is broken. The clouds that made dark the last hours of men float far away from the paths they tread. The New Adam has triumphed over death and the grave. He is on His upward way. The long despair of the human heart shall cease, a new hope begin. Life and immortality have been brought to light, and their Morning Star has kindled above the earth.

All the wide sweep of meaning and instruction in these words we could not hope to gather at any single study. I will take the words simply as the first message of the risen Saviour to the disciples. And I shall be content if I can lift a few simple thoughts out of their fulness—any thought, the very homeliest, so it be really from this message—must enrich our hearts. And it may be that God will bless the exercise to us, to give us spirits more akin to Christ's, that we may be made meeter than we have been to serve Him and suffer for Him, to believe Him and love Him in our daily lives.

I.

And how can I fail, in any cluster of thoughts from these words, to notice at the very outset this most blessed one, *that Christ is a gracious Master*. Here was a service, the very highest at that moment which a human being could render, and it is Mary of Magdala who is chosen

to render it! To be the first witness to man of Christ's resurrection—to carry tidings which shall be life, and consolation, not only to the first disciples, but to their successors in every generation. An angel might have coveted the honour! It is bestowed on Mary of Magdala.

There are moments in our lives when the darkness and the light within us awake to special conflict: when the past, laden with burdens of our unworth and misery, clashes against the present, with its bounteous loads of mercy; times of intense feeling, when the memory of what we have been redeemed from, and the grace which has redeemed us, chase each other through the soul, like driving clouds in a moonlit sky, and we are stirred to the depths of our being, and shame and thankfulness and hope and fear produce the most violent agitations in our spirits.

This conflict of light and darkness might well awake in Mary—although it is a great wrong to her memory to call her the Magdalene, in the modern sense of that word. But while there is not a vestige of proof that she had ever led a life of evil, yet her youth was clouded with a great misery, and her soul had been the dwelling-place of devils. Out of this woman the Lord had cast seven devils. When He found her, her life was a blight, her reason was overmastered, and she was—for her miseries—an outcast, a thing lost, and scorned, and perhaps trodden down. And when there was no eye to pity her He pitied her. He sought her out and found her, and lifted her gently from the dust, and delivered her from her tormentors. He breathed new life into

her; He bestowed new faith upon her; He made her soul the dwelling-place of His truth; He clothed her with His righteousness and beauty; He trained her to new affections; He made her peaceful, and reverent, and faithful, and womanly. And now, in this high hour of His triumph, now when this great work has to be done, it is Mary He selects to do it. The woman, out of whom He had cast seven devils, shall carry the message of life to His disciples! Oh, precious, ineffable, wonder-working grace! By that grace the lowliest may become the greatest in the kingdom! Our past debasements do not shut us out from Christian service! The vessel reclaimed from dishonour is not debarred from honour. The gracious Master retains no back looks into the past. Our very sins are blotted out; "He remembereth our iniquities no more." He remembers not the errors of our youth, but His mercies, which have been for ever. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on, and put shoes on the feet"—from henceforth the accepted, pardoned, liberated soul, may carry, must carry, the highest messages of the King.

II.

The next thought which comes to us out of these words carries us from the graciousness of Christ to the integrity of His friendship. He is a faithful friend. His first care is care for His friends. His first anxiety is to send healing to their wounded hearts. He knows all their perplexities. He knows well how at this moment, scattered as sheep without their shepherd, they are bewildered and cast down and afraid.

And first of all His acts—He sends them this touching and reheartening message. The gulf was wide between our Saviour and them—looking at Him only as a Man. He had been the earnest, untiring teacher of their spirits; they had been disciples slow of heart to believe. He had been to them the faithfullest of friends. They, faithless, had forsaken Him in His darkest hour, and left Him alone. He, through all hindrances, had retained His love for them. He loved them unto the end. But for Him they, by weakness, by fear of man, by weariness in well-doing, must have fallen from their loyalty. He sustained them in their attachment. He drew them by His love. He bore with them in their backslidings. He loved them, and trusted them, and clung to them to the end. Yet how sorely was He tried. Envy and worldliness had clogged up the hearts of some. Peter had denied Him. Philip disbelieved Him. Thomas does not expect Him to return. Each of them has failed of the measures of a perfect friendship. But His true, loving, and perfect friendship covers the multitude of the imperfections of theirs. He clothes them in His own loyalty. He remembers their good, but not their evil. They had received Him when others cast Him out. They had believed in Him when others mocked. They had left their all to follow Him. They had ministered to Him, and witnessed for Him, and had been to Him as a resting place for His weary heart in His laborious task. The grain of faith removes the mountain of unfaithfulness. He thinks of them in this hour of joy. He will gather about Him again those sharers of His sorrow. He will sun them with the brightness of His

glory. "They suffered with Me; they shall also reign with Me." "Mary, go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God."

III.

Another delightful thought—one kindred to those I have named—which this message discloses, is the generosity of Christ. He is not ashamed of His people. Although He stands so far above us, He recognises us as brethren. "Go to My brethren," He said to Mary. Notwithstanding all their failures He was not ashamed to call them brethren. And it was the morning of the resurrection He called them by that name. It was the first time He had called them brethren. Other names He had given to them—names significant and endearing—but not yet the name of brother. They were His disciples to learn from Him. They were His servants to minister to Him. Recently He had raised them to be His friends. "I call you no longer servants, but friends." And with all their imperfections they were truly friends. They had risen into that power of sympathy with Him in which all friendship consists. They could enter—although but dimly it might be—into His plans. They understood what the Master was doing. But now, they were to be more than even this. A more loving name—a higher relationship—is in store for them. The friend is to quicken and blossom up into the brother. He had been more than a friend to them; they were now to be more than friends to Him. "Mary, go to My brethren."

These first disciples had not known how near they stood to Jesus. Disciple, subject, servant, friend! They knew all that. But "Brother" was too high and far.

And yet He had dealt with them as Brothers. Every word He spake had "Brother" in its depths. Every miracle He wrought had "Brother" at its heart. His whole teaching led to this very name. The life He revealed to them had its first element in its relation to the Father. The God He commended to them was His Father. It was by the name of Father He prayed to Him in the company of these disciples. The message He proclaimed to them was a message He had received from the Father. It was the Father's angels whose legions He might have summoned to His defence. It was the Father's glory for which He had lived. It was into the Father's hand He commended His spirit on the Cross. Yet never till now did He formally unfold and embody in words the inference from all this; never till now did He link the disciples to Himself by the actual name of brethren.

On one occasion He had intimated as a general statement that those were His brethren who did the will of God. On another He taught them a prayer, whose practical basis was brotherhood; but the actual outspoken word, as a word applied and sent to them, He only pronounces now. And herein lies the generosity of His pronouncing it now. His battle is ended now. His victory is completed now. His kingdom is established above the floods of death now. The Redeemer has risen from the grave—the first-born from among the dead; and death has no more dominion over Him.

His human life is crowned. His divine life is gloriously displayed. The power by which He has risen from the dead is the power by which all things in the universe are subdued to God. And it is in these high circumstances, when no doubt can rest upon His great message any more, when He has been declared to be the Son of God, with power, by His very resurrection from the dead, when in the most literal sense He is one with Heaven, with Eternity, and with God; then, and not earlier, but then with almost the first breath of that recovered glory which He had with the Father before the world began, He bestows this new name on His disciples. Then, in this first hour of His glory, in this first dawn of His triumph, this generous Saviour calls His people brethren.

That is the name the Lord delights in still; and the fault is in ourselves if we do not hear the Lord calling us by it every day. We will not believe in the regal freeness —the perfect generosity—of the grace which bestows it. Looking only at our own unworth, we keep saying, What are *we* that the holy Jesus should call us brethren?

Do not judge the Saviour by the ungenerous thoughts of man. His thoughts are not our thoughts—but large, loving, high in their forbearance and generosity above ours, as heaven is above the earth.

He was not ashamed to call the disciples, who forsook Him and fled from Him, brethren. Neither will He be ashamed of us, although as weak, as full of failures and forsakings, as they.

And in this shall shine forth His generosity. As He was not ashamed of His first disciples in the first hour of

His glory, neither will He be ashamed of us in that still higher hour, when the clouds and the angels shall announce the glory, and heaven and earth shall be called to witness it. In that hour also He will be true to the magnanimity revealed at the sepulchre. He will call to His own by their dearest name, and that name is the name of Brother.

IV.

One other thought, yet hardly another—only the other side of that I have been unfolding, yet a side well worthy of separate mention. Christ is Himself a Brother.

That is implied in the very name of brethren. He reveals the Divine *Brother* in His message to the human *brethren*. But He puts the fact beyond all question when He adds, "My Father, and your Father"—Christ our Brother!

This is the dear aspect in which He discloses Himself to us to-day.

Yet you will observe that He does this as One who besides realises all that He is to those to whom He speaks. He does not lay aside the pre-eminence of the First Begotten. It is "*My* Father," "*My* God" first: "My Father," and only then "your Father." Christ's Father first, and ours because He is Christ's. We come into this great heritage through Christ.

Then again, it is as Mary's Lord He says to her, "Go." It is the same voice which spake in laws and ordinances, by prophets and kings, in days of old. But who does not see, this being acknowledged, that even in His own

thoughts the Master is in the background—the voice of the Master only incidentally utters itself? In the very core of the message is the form and voice of the Brother. It is from the heart of a Brother He says to her, "Go to My brethren."

See then now how loyally to us, how lovingly, how thoroughly, He takes the relationship into which He has promoted us. He has not left His human sympathies or relationship in the grave. He is human, human-hearted, a very Brother of men still! It is as a Brother He speaks. The emotions which flow out towards His people are those of a Brother. It is as our Brother He has risen from the grave. It is as our Brother He speaks from the throne. God's own, only Son, very God; yet man's true Brother. Our Redeemer, but also our Brother! His heart is the heart of a Brother. His work on the cross the work of a Brother.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend. Jesus laid down His life for us. By this proof, which goes to every heart, He proved His Brother love. Brother as truly as God. God manifest, God translated into a Brother's form! Who shall put right words on this great fact? In Him God meets with man, man with God. The Divine Man, our Brother, comes forth from God to embrace His human brethren; embracing Him, we are borne upwards into the heart of God.

Of the multitude of thoughts to which this fact leads I will only allude to two.

1. As a Brother He knows what is in man, and how weak we are, and also how strong by God's grace we

may become. As our Brother His sympathy is perfect, but it is also *holy*, and has a perpetual bias towards God and righteousness and truth.

2. Christ as Brother is the grand attraction for human love—the Divine object behind every human object. As life goes on we become dulled, and cease to be lovers, because we cease to find objects for our love. Death breaks in, and the familiar object is removed. The world breaks in, and hearts are sundered.

In the midst of all this falling away Christ offers Himself as the abiding object of our love. "I am your Brother. My eyes look at you through the eyes of the earthly objects of your love; My heart yearns for your love. Let your love reach through all earthly objects to ME. I will meet the longings of your heart. I will hide your love where neither death nor the world can reach it, nor any storm or pestilence shall do it harm." Oh, happy soul, who can pour out its love on Christ, to whom Christ reveals Himself as the object of love! For—

> "When Thou mak'st Thy presence felt,
> And when the soul hath grasped the right,
> How fast the dreary shadows melt
> Beneath Thy warm and loving light.
>
> In Thee I find a nobler birth,
> A glory o'er the world I see;
> And Paradise returns to earth,
> And blooms again for us in Thee."

EMMAUS.

LUKE xxiv. 24–32.

THESE two disciples on the way to Emmaus, besides being witnesses for the risen Saviour, are types of those among the Saviour's people whose hopes have been suddenly blighted, who have been visited by unlooked-for calamity, and whose hearts are torn asunder by perplexity and sorrow. Suddenly, their beloved Teacher, the Prophet who had spoken to them as never man spake, the Master in whom they had found the long-expected Messiah —"Him of whom all the prophets had spoken"—was taken from them, condemned, and put to death.

It is only necessary to listen to the talk of the two men to see how profound was their disappointment. "We trusted it had been He who should have redeemed Israel." And He was dead—dead by the will of the religious leaders of the nation. Even what they had heard before leaving Jerusalem concerning the Resurrection did not bring comfort to them. There was a report by certain women of their company, a strange report of angels and an empty grave; and, on the spur of that, a visit by the leading disciples to the grave. But the result was disappointing—the grave was empty. "*Him* they saw not."

This was the real pang of their hearts, "Him they

saw not." Only an empty tomb! It was all so strange, so shadowy, so like a dream; all except this, that "Him they saw not." The last sad vision of their Master was the vision of Him on the Cross, dead—"He who should have redeemed Israel." The fond dream of the Messiah was over, and darkness had fallen down once more over the land and its people.

It was the afternoon of a spring day, in a country where spring makes all things beautiful. Although the site of Emmaus is not known, the direction in which it lay is. And the way, as you advance in it, is through beautiful objects: "orange and lemon gardens, olive groves, shady nooks," and running water. If beautiful objects could have comforted sad hearts, this should have been a highway of consolation. But comfort came not by the things they saw. They were suffering from the sudden shock, from the unlooked-for defeat of their anticipation, from the blight and darkness which had fallen down on the fondest, most cherished, most sacred hope of their lives. It was into the heart of that darkness the Messiah they were lamenting now appeared. He came as a friendly stranger; not in His own form, but as Mark says, "in another form," in the form and garb probably of one of the Passover guests who had been to Jerusalem to keep the feast, and were now returning to their homes. And in that form He set Himself to comfort those aching hearts.

If the two men are types of disciples suddenly visited by calamity, the Saviour's dealings with them are manifestations of His permanent method of comforting such as they.

I.

The first act of this comforting was a very homely one. It was no more—to look at—than this, to bring them in a human way to open their hearts to Him. But homely though that seems, it is really always the first step to comfort. So long as the heart is shut up with its own bitterness, there can be no comfort. There is only the friction of sad thoughts, only the ever-recurring bruise of the disappointment, the amazement, the perplexity, the despair at the sudden blow. Everything begins to change, when, instead of the endless revolving of sad thoughts, the thoughts are taken one by one and set forth before the mind of another. The change is from darkness to light, if the mind of that other is open and sympathetic. And open and sympathetic in a wonderful way they found this stranger who had joined them on the way. By the touch of simple human sympathy He made a way into their hearts. By that way He brought the dark shadows out. By that way He sent the kindly consolations in. It is His usual method—the way of nature, of kindliness, of humane feeling. He comes to His sorely tried disciples still by that way, laying kindly human hands on their wounded hearts. The comfort comes from God, but in a human fashion, in a human garb; in common speech, amid the common events of the day. It is really comfort from God; but in the form and dress of it, it is to look at and feel just the comfort of a Christian neighbour, fellow-wayfarer, or friend. And into how excellent a view of the working of

the Lord's Government does this method admit us. By means of it we see God coming nearer to sorrowing hearts on every path we have to tread, and by the tender sympathies of friends and neighbours, sometimes by strangers encountering them in what seems an accidental way, the sufferers are lifted out of their own thoughts into new views of things, and are helped to open their hearts to let out the story of their sorrows; and then, when the heart is opened and the tears flowing, there enters quietly the river of God, the first waves of the healing which makes glad the burdened and aching heart.

II.

But good and effective though this first movement in the comforting of His suffering disciples was, it was only the first. After the kindly touch of His human sympathy came the light of His divine instruction. Having secured the confidence of His fellow-travellers, having got them to tell their sorrow, He at once began to shed the light of God's Word upon it. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." It was into that secret He now brought those two disciples. Their view of the Messiah who was to redeem Israel was still a very imperfect one. To a great extent it was a Messiah strong with the strength of an earthly king. A Messiah whose face was more marred than any man's, a root out of the dry ground, who could be taken by His enemies and broken on a cross, and who, by means of such suffering, was to work out the designs of God—this they could not under-

stand; this at least they had not, after all the teaching they had received, understood.

Did not suffering lie in the very task He undertook? Could He be in a world all marred by sin and not be pierced and grieved by the spectacle? Could the forces of evil be all about His path and Himself untouched? Could He fulfil His great task as the Bearer of the sin of men and not feel the doom, weight, and pain of them? Could He, the Holy One of God in an unholy world, escape the oppression, the hatred, the persecution of the unholy? Ought He not to have suffered? If in the divine willingness of His heart He took the place of men, was there any other way of being their Saviour but to endure what it was theirs to endure? He had to die for them. By the sacrifice of Himself alone could He deliver them. Ought He not to have suffered?

This was the "secret" which the Lord now opened up to them. He made plain to them out of Scripture that the Messiah promised was a suffering Messiah. "*Ought not the Messiah to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?*" Through suffering—suffering first, glory after! It was a new idea to them; but it was the very idea of which they stood in need. It was the Divine secret in the life of the Messiah. It was the entrance of God's light on their own sorrow. It changed the entire world for them. The death of their Master was no longer to be regarded by them as an untoward or accidental event. It was the fulfilment, the completion, of His mission. It was only when He had suffered that He could say, "It is finished." *Now*, they saw that all the paths of His life, from the cradle to the cross, were

paths through suffering. Now, they understood how His glory in Resurrection could only emerge when He had endured shame by the Cross.

That was a new idea to those two. It is a strange idea still to many. Yet it ought not to be strange. The Bible is full of it. The Messiah promised to the Jews was a suffering Messiah. The Saviour commended to us is one crowned with thorns. It is the secret of all Christian sorrow. For the Prince of it on the Cross; for His humblest followers:—it is still *suffering first, glory after. Through suffering, into the Kingdom.* That is the highway of the Cross; Christ's way to us; our way to Christ. By that highway and not another the King brought salvation to the world; and on that highway, in one form or another, every suffering one among His people must still advance.

In the light thus shed upon their hearts, into what a new position the subject of their sorrow ascended for those two sufferers that day. They knew now that He was no longer dead. If His grave was empty, they knew why it was empty. He was risen. He was entered into His glory.

And into how changed a position the dear ones taken from ourselves ascend, from the moment we are able to look at their death in the light of this great law of the Kingdom. We may have been looking, as those two were looking, only at the blank place in the family circle, at the sufferings, the death, the grave, the things that are seen; we have not yet realised that these are but steps on the forward and upward march of our beloved to God. We would have the sweet companionship—the

beautiful life—the coming in and out daily, to go on for ever. Ah, my suffering ones, that is not for any of us the Law of the Kingdom of our Lord. The losses you are lamenting are nothing strange—they have not come to you and passed others by. Our Heavenly Father deals not so with His children that any of us can escape such trials. "He laid heavy sufferings on the Son of His love. He has laid heavy sufferings on some of you." It is by suffering we are perfected.

"Christ leads us through no darker rooms
Than He went through before.
He that into God's Kingdom comes,
Must enter by this door."

III.

But the Lord's ministry of consolation for those two disciples was not ended, when He thus brought them into the secret, in the light of which they were now seeing light. A greater comfort still was in store for them. They were next to discover that the Expounder of the secret—the friendly stranger—was none other than the Lord Himself.

The scene at the door of the house, when they arrived at Emmaus, is very instructive. The Lord will not enter unless He is invited. He will still be a mere stranger, a chance acquaintance by the way, unless they will it otherwise. It was a moment of trial for the two disciples. If they have failed to receive His teaching; or had received it carelessly, or coldly, they should have missed the blessing.—But it was not so. Their hearts

had been stirred, their thoughts were fired. A new light was shining for them. They had been lifted by this stranger into a new view of God, of His Word, and of the death of their beloved Master. And now, in this moment of testing they stood the test. They would not let go the bringer of their joy. They constrained Him. "Abide with us," they said, "for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent." It was the comforted heart clinging to the Comforter. It was the receiving heart beginning to stir with the motions of the giving heart. They had received spiritual good: it was a small thing that they should offer of their earthly goods to the stranger.

Yes! A very small thing to look at. Just a little act of natural human kindness. Just one of those little things, inattention to which makes so many a life poor. To have failed in this little thing that day, would have been to have missed kindling one of the lights, which have been shedding their blessed rays on the world ever since.

Those two at that door in the Emmaus village knew better than to act in such a way. They constrained the Teacher who had opened up the Scripture to them, and He came with them into their home. And what we next see is the strange Teacher, seated at the head of the table, blessing and distributing the bread.

And it was then, and while the eyes of the two disciples were fastened on the form of the stranger breaking and distributing the bread,—it was then that the veil fell from their eyes, and they recognised the Master Himself. What a moment was that! In one

flash of recognition the face of the Lord shone above them. But it was a moment only, and while they looked, He was gone. But that moment had been, and it was now for ever theirs, and through their possession of it, it is ours to-day.

The Eternal World shone in upon them for that one brief moment. The face of the Master kindled over them. His form had been by their side on the journey. His lips had taught them; the very tones of His voice, as He blessed the bread, were still in the air.

Can you realise the throb of new excitement—the astonishing rush of new emotions—as the truth flashed into their souls at that moment? They had seen the Risen Lord.

In the previous movements of the Lord in comforting the two disciples, we find that the methods followed by Him then are the same He uses still in consoling His people. Can we hope to find in this third step of the comfort, in this wonderful third experience of these disciples, what we may still find in the experience of Christian people? May the tried disciple of our very own circle in this day, you or I, in a time of sorrow, come, as these first disciples came, to a moment in which, for consolation, we shall see the very face of God!

Yes. That is the very lesson of this story which I wish now strongly to press upon your hearts. I say, that all the ways of God to His people are old ways, the same old ways in which He came in the days of Moses, in the days of Christ. What was miraculous in the old form of His coming was unessential, temporary. Behind the miracle stood the common, eternal

law, or way of working. He comes still in the garb of a fellow-pilgrim, laying on our wounded hearts the touch of simple human sympathy. Still, as of old, by human lips, or by the ministry of His Spirit on our own thoughts, He brings us into the secret of the trial, into the light of the great law by which all suffering is explained; and then, last of all, He brings us to some moment in our career when the whole sorrow is lifted up before us transfigured, clothed in light, and we see God as the sender both of the sorrow and the light.

The pure in heart shall see God. Do not postpone to the far future your hope of the fulfilment of that word. Not a day passes in which it is not fulfilled. In homes made lonely by death, in lives from which the light seems to have passed for ever, there are occurring continually those divine moments, those chinks in time through which Eternity shines, those revelations to sad hearts of the face of God.

Ay, my dear friend! and the moment comes, as often as otherwise, when we are engaged in some homely task like that in which those two of Emmaus were engaged. When we are seated with the fatherless children at the family table—or when we are met in the little reading circle where a place is empty—or when we are folding past, for the last time, the things in which we had once decked our dead child—or when we are sorrowing that we shall see the face of our beloved teacher no more: in such a moment, when we expect it not, a something enters into our thoughts, a vision, a sense of the Divine love takes hold of us, fills the eyes of our soul,—it is the face of God.

IV.

In closing there are two lessons—one for experience, one for service.

The first reflection of the two, when the Lord had vanished, was, that they had had a token of His presence all the way—that all through the Lord's dealing with them He had made them experience signs of His presence. "Did not our hearts burn within us as He talked with us by the way?" Words cannot tell the blessing on which you would enter if you were to lay that lesson rightly to heart. It is the weakness of our faith that makes us yearn for signs in the heaven. The real signs are within. Not above you, that you should have to climb to it: not beneath you, that you should seek it in the deep, but in your heart—in your daily experience. I am calling your attention to realities of an unseen world, but an unseen world in your own being. Those times when the whole nature seems to be moved—when we are touched as by an angel's wings, when flashes of unknown light seem to gleam upon us, when we are placed under assurances of divine mercy and love; these are the precious signs sent to us from God—to which those who are wise will give heed—to announce His presence by our side. Those are the love tokens which are steps in a Jacob's ladder, to lead us up to the vision of God Himself, when to us also, as to Jacob, as to those two of Emmaus, shall come a moment when we shall have to say, "God was in this place, and we knew it not." Do not lightly esteem them, do not pass them by. They are messengers from God to draw you to Himself.

And next comes the lesson as to service. In some way or other—I will suppose God has many ways—you have had such a vision of God as I have been describing. After the golden moment of vision comes the glorious time of work. They saw God in the old time on the Mount, and did eat and drink. That was beautiful in its own place, and true worship of God; but Christ has taken us on a further stage. He brings us into the same visions, and then He sends us forth to work.

"They rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread."

We found those two in sorrow, taking a sad journey to their home. Behold them now, filled with joy, retracing, as with winged feet, their steps to Jerusalem.

When we first met with them the death of their Lord was a mysterious grief to them, it is now a revealed secret and a joy. They have entered on a new career. A little while ago they were mourning—they are witnesses, messengers of glad tidings now. They will not hide their new found light. They are hasting in the joy of it to shed its blessedness on others. What they have themselves received they will carry at once to their fellow-sufferers in Jerusalem. They also shall share their new joy. They also shall be brought into the secret, that through death their beloved Master has entered into His glory. It is Christian work they are doing, and they are doing it by the power of the

fellowship they have had with Christ. They could have been no bright messengers of joy if they had refused that fellowship on their journey, or the opening of their hearts when He talked with them by the way. It is because their hearts burned within them then as He talked, it was because their eyes beheld His form as He broke bread at their table, that they are now hasting back over the long journey, under the silent night, through the sleeping city, to that upper room, where the other disciples are still assembled in the same new and sleepless joy. And that is still the secret of Christian work: first fellowship with Christ, then service —first Christ in the heart, then the heart in Christ's work.

But my closing word shall be concerning the Lord Himself. Is there a finer, kindlier, more human exhibition of His love than in this story which I have brought before you to-day? He had just borne the burden of the world's sin: He had endured the Cross, the awful pains, the hiding of His Father's face, the humiliation of the grave; and yet, when He emerges from the humiliation, on the very day of His emergence, He begins to comfort the sorrowing and speak a word to the weary.

The patient sufferer so shortly before! the loving and patient consoler so soon after. O Love of Christ! how constant, how unresting, how wonderful thou art! This is the love you are to recal at the Table. This is the Lord Himself you are to remember. Think of Him as on the Cross dying for you! Think of Him as

walking unseen by your side on the journey of life and comforting you. And by faith contemplate Him sitting at the head of the Table, blessing the bread and the cup, and saying to each of you, "Eat, drink, O My Beloved; this do in remembrance of Me."

CHRIST'S EXALTATION.

PHIL. ii. 8, 9, 11.

Two paths open up before us in this rich and important passage. By the one we should learn to what heights the divine law extends, which makes the Christian a copy of Christ; by the other to what height Christ Himself has been raised.

Now, there is no doubt that it is the first of these which the Apostle was concerned to open up when He wrote these words. He wanted to show that for Christians the one ideal, the one standard, was the mind that was in Christ. In the immediately preceding passage he has shown that the realisation of this mind will take the Christian down to deeps as great as those to which Christ descended—that just as Christ, in His divine humility and self-forgetting, became obedient even unto death, the same renunciation, the same unselfish devotion to the good of others, will make the Christian obedient unto death.

And having shown this, and still keeping the parallel with which he began, between Christian life and the mind that was in Christ, before his readers, the Apostle in the passage to which we have now come goes on to show, that as in the humiliation, in the laying down which is man's part, the likeness holds good, so also

it will be found to hold in the exaltation, the reward of this humiliation which is God's part. Christian life is not, as its enemies say, mere submission, self-renunciation, and obedience unto death, but also the divine rebound from these, the glorious up-springing of the bent branch into the clear sky above.

Nothing could be more encouraging therefore to us than to enter on this new development of the parallel between Christ and us. As it happened to Him, it will happen to every one who truly possesses and acts out the mind which was in Him. If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him. If it lies in us to be like Him, for love's sake obedient unto death, it pertains to us to ascend like Him to a glory the highest among men.

But although this line of thought is really that along which the mind of the Apostle moved, and although it would be both cheering and in many other ways practically important to keep to it, the exaltation of Christ is such a central fact, and is so much seldomer than His humiliation dwelt upon, that I will spend the time open to us this morning in setting it before you.

It was no exceptional, no arbitrary proceeding. It was the outworking of an abiding and ever-present law in the kingdom of God, a law which the Lord often enforced: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." He illustrated that law in the everyday sphere of social life, in the natural influence of humility and seeking the lowest place at a friend's dinner table, and in the high sphere of prayer and worship, in the contrast between the self-exalting Pharisee and the humble self-

abasing publican. He was Himself, too, the greatest example of it. This Saviour, who to save publicans and sinners made Himself so one with them as to assume their place and burden and punishment, was for that very reason exalted to the highest place in the Temple of God. His descent, in the power of love, into the region of death was both the preparation and the condition of His ascent into the region of power. He was brought by His enemies to the lowest, to the very basest that cruelty could bring Him to. He was made an object of scorn and of shame and spitting to the passer-by.

But by the very sufferings He endured He was placed on the first round of the ladder, above which are the steps of the throne of God. He was cast out by human hands, wickedly slain, and cast into oblivion and death. But do not think of Him, even on a day like this, as only a sufferer. He is also the Risen and Exalted Lord, in the Heaven to hear your cry, to rejoice in your love, to bless you. In those very realms the everlasting arms were outstretched to receive Him, and the last act of human cruelty was the preparation for the first act of Divine reward.

But now, taking our start from this general truth, let us consider, in the light of the successive statements in this great passage before us, the ascending facts of this state of exaltation.

Consider, first, the exaltation of His Name. God has given Him a name that is above every name. The name of Christ is much more than *Jesus.* But look at it just now in its more limited form. Look at the

position which the actual name "Jesus" has attained in the esteem and affection of mankind. Is any other, among all the names of men, so high? Can any other compare with it for attraction and moral influence?

Let us go back for a moment to the hour when death seemed to have blotted it utterly out—when its bearer was, to look at, but one life among many which would descend into oblivion like drops of rain falling into the sea. Even then this name entered on its great ascent. It became a centre to the few who had known Him. It was also the gospel they proclaimed to others. The happiest days of their lives had been the days spent with Him who bore that name. Into the same happiness they invited others, by simply declaring that He who bore it had risen from the dead, and was now in heaven to save them from their sins. When those disciples appealed to the heavens it was to Him who carried that name into those heavens they appealed. When they looked into the future, the hope of the world for them was the return of Jesus to the earth.

And just see all that was included in this. It implied a circle of living, earnest, devoted followers, to whom this name was the highest—for whom this name had the greatest attraction among the names of men. It implied a circle, in which, if you had asked who was their best friend—their Lord, their life—the answer would have been "Jesus." And this answer would not come from ignorant men. They were acquainted with the greatest names which the human race had yet known. They knew Abraham, and Moses, and David. But this was for

them a name higher than these—the name of One who was the Lord of these, the fulfilment of these.

Consider what took place for the name when the wonder of Pentecost occurred. That event was the transfiguration of the name for every heart in the upper room; it was the endowment of it with Divine authority and power. In that hour the name was lifted from the sphere of natural affection into that of Divine sway. On the tongues of fire, which descended and sat on every one present, the name may be said to have ascended to its place on the throne of God.

From that hour history has not ceased to display in the story of our race the spectacle of the ascent of the name of Christ as a name of influence among men. King, Kaiser, Emperor, Lord—the names of the people who have borne such titles in the kingdoms of the world—have gone on paling with steady decrease of light before this burning Star. It was a little thing—a mere glow-worm light at first. Lying in the grave—lying very lowly in Joseph of Arimathea's grave—it became before six centuries were past the rallying name of armies, the glory of kingdoms, the object of passionate consecration and worship among men.

What are the greatest names in poetry or art, in human benevolence or wisdom, in the present age when placed beside this? It would be a kind of desecration if I were to class the very greatest of these in the same line with Christ. These are, for the excellence of those who bore them, mountains high it may be. Christ is the solid globe from which the mountains rise. These in their own circle are orbs of light; He is the celestial

deep in which they move. The highest art, the sublimest poetry, the truest history, the most perfect science, co-operate to exalt this name, and to extend its influence among men. "God has given HIM a name which is above every name."

Consider next the exalted function fulfilled by this name. It is in this name that every knee is to bow. Prayer follows the light which is in this name—enters by the door which this name opens. Wherever knees are bent, the name in whose light they are bent, the name in whose power they are bent, is the name of Jesus. "If ye ask anything *in My name*, it will be granted." He is exalted that "*in* His name" every knee should bow.

Only think what this practically means. It is the condition, it is the plea of prayer. We can only expect answers to prayer, and we can only offer true worship to God when our spirits are, so to speak, resting on a basis of truth and on the Divine will. This basis of truth is the revelation of the Divine will—it is the name of Christ.

We are called on to worship God in truth, and we are promised answers to our prayers when we ask what is agreeable to God's will. But where is this indispensable basis and ground of truth and of acceptance to be found? It is found only in the name of Christ. He is the embodiment to us of the truth on which both prayer and life must rest. Asking "for Christ's sake," truly understood, means really asking for truth's sake, asking also that the very will of God be done. And that is the high, supreme place assigned to this name of Jesus.

In that region which is the most divine in man, where men's thoughts try to form right views of the great Father, where human hearts strive to render true homage to the Giver of all good, and from which ascend our cries for help, it is this name on which the prayers and cries must rest. In the kingdom of the soul, which reaches down within us into depths of thought and desire and feeling, the ascent by which the spirit of man climbs to the Hearer of prayer, the mountain on which the spirit stands to see the land of promise, the light which the spirit follows in its groping after God, the plea it utters in its appeal to God, is ever, is only this name of Jesus.

Think of the whole family of God, of the multitudes which no man can number, of the sea of upturned faces, of the hands outstretched, of the knees bent. It is in the name of Jesus every spirit in all that multitude addresses its prayer or its praise to God. We are at this moment, therefore, studying these words on the verge of one of the greatest realities of revealed religion. If you have followed me so far as I have gone in the exposition, your spirits with mine are now standing on the confines of that vast and glorious vision, the mediatorial kingdom of our Redeemer. What have I been trying to put into modern forms of thought and language for you? Just this great fact, that Christ is the way to the Father, the way by which the human intellect is to reach a true conception of God, by which the human heart is to reach the heart of God, by which the struggling human spirit is to attain the salvation of God, by which the sin-laden penitent is to obtain acceptance from God. But the

vision expands as we look more intensely into its contents. The words reveal, as we follow on to know their deep significance, an empire vaster and grander than the history of our race has known.

We think of Christ as Lord of the conscience, Lord of the home, Lord of the Church, Lord of the world of men. The vision which opens before our eyes here is a kingdom whose bounds are far beyond those of the hills on which men build their homes, or the world in which they spend their days. Like a splendid rainbow beside the sea this vision touches the eternal heaven, and fulfils its circle in the reflection of the sea, while it encloses man in its perfect arch. "In the name of Jesus every knee shall bow —of things in heaven—and things in earth—and things under the earth." What are we to understand by this threefold classification of worshippers? Are the things in heaven the angels? Are the things in earth human beings now living? Are the things under the earth the dead? It would not be aside from the truth of these words to assert that such is the meaning. To take only one of the classes—angels have desired to know more of God, and in the incarnation and death of Christ they have seen a glory of which they were ignorant before. And no doubt for them also, although they have not sinned, this new full light concerning God is a real way to the Father which their pure spirit will surely use. But the vision is wider, grander, more extensive than even this interpretation would show. Not the living inhabitants only, but the very framework, the principles, the powers, the forces, material and spiritual, of the entire universe lie within the radius of the kingdom of Christ. This

wondrous work of Christ in coming to save us touches the greatest depths of being, touches the very rocks and insensate things of earth. The Lamb slain before the foundation of the world ascends at last to a throne to work out a Divine purpose, for which all creation groans and travails until now. The vail is drawn aside, although in language profoundly symbolic, in the vision of John. We see Christ in these visions seated on the mediatorial throne, a Lamb as it had been slain, in the heart of power, "in the midst of the throne."

We see a circle of worshippers far extending through all the region of life, bending before Him, offering their homage, sounding His praise. And the vision closes by unutterable bursts of praise sounding far out to the remotest verge of created things: "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever." I do not seek to penetrate the details of this glory. It is enough for me to know that in the greatest vision of the universe, which it has ever been given to man to realise or dream of, Christ is represented in the centre and on the throne. When I try to frame any conception of the visible fact, I am blinded for excess of light. The glory wraps itself up in the light which is inaccessible. The light withdraws itself from my understanding, and I am back once more in the region of faith. For one I am content that it should be so. In this, as in so many lower things, I am content to walk by faith. But the vision only increases when I have

assented to this condition of surveying it by faith, and I am borne far beyond the bound of the eternal hills, and higher than eagles soar, into a kingdom greater than that which the tube of the astronomer brings to view, into the kingdom of the unseen, of angels and men departed, of God the Father and the Holy Ghost, into that Heaven of Heavens wherein are unutterable things, and things hard to be understood with our present capacities, the kingdom of principle, and law, and relationship and the Divine presence, and worship; and in the very heart of that, on the very throne of that, I see by faith, I salute and bow to Jesus as Lord over all, God blessed for ever. And I call upon all here who love the Lord Jesus to lift up their hearts to this height of glory to which God has raised our Lord. Admit the vision of it into your heart. Admit the thought of it among the working thoughts of your life. Besides the back look to the cross, habituate yourselves to the upward look to the throne. He will not be less dear to you, or less near, if you can see Him to be high as the eternal Heaven. But you will carry a consolation more in your hearts if you can bring your inward vision into the habit of the upward look.

Up, my heart! up, every heart, up to the throne of God, up to the height of God, up to the love and mercy and righteousness of God! Christ is there, His glory is there. By associating our Lord with that height, we shall know more vitally the tenderness, the love, the compassion He pours out upon us, when in the memorial feast, and in the occasions of need in our daily life, we find Him walking as a Brother by our side.

CHRIST'S REVELATION OF HEAVEN.

THE TWO WORLDS.

THERE is a sight which those who cross the Atlantic often see. The ocean heaves and swells with life. Great crests form on the waves; the waves seem to break away from the sides of the vessel, and chase each other across the entire plain of waters; and then, far out, as far as the eye can see, on the very edge of the horizon, the crested waves leap and dance like wild horses, and disappear one by one into the unseen.

As often as I recall that spectacle I think of it as a symbol of our life upon earth. There is the same restless heave and swell, the same crested pride, the same breaking away and racing of competing lives, the same wild clash of toil and conflict far as the eye can reach, and at last the same disappearance of all in the unseen.

Our condition on earth is even more pathetic than this spectacle can symbolise. At sea the horizon is a wall of heaven's blue, and the sea-forms leap into an unseen that is only dark with excess of light. In our earthly life the horizon is a wall of shadows, and the gate through which the busy crowds disappear is the grave.

Is it any wonder, in the presence of this girdle of death, this passionless unseen world, which sends no

answer back to our yearning, and absorbs us all at last, that men should turn with eager hearts to Revelation to find out what awaits them on the other side? Perhaps there never has been a time when the interest in this problem has been more intense than at the present moment. Thousands of earnest students are appealing to the Word to disclose the secrets of the future. Hitherto, however, the questioning has concentrated itself over one side of the problem, and shows itself almost exclusively as concerned about the future condition of the lost. That such concern should be felt can be a surprise to no one who remembers who are usually included in this class. But none the less, for all practical ends of religious thought, it is a misfortune that this interest is restricting itself so much to the dark side of future existence. The *how much* or *how little* of retribution deals with but a single issue of the great problem of the future. And for the world to come, as for this, and for the fate of the lost, as of the saved, the supreme question must ever be that of life. What is the life which souls take with them into the future? It is life that determines the soul's future and makes the world it is to live in. And it was life Christ came to bestow. To understand the future to which His life admits us is the nearest way to a knowledge of the entire future. Heaven and hell are the two sides of the same orb; the shadow which makes the outer darkness of the one is simply the absence of the life which makes the glory of the other.

In the observations which follow an endeavour will be made to excite an interest in the positive side of the

problem. I propose to give some account of the Lord's own teaching concerning the future of the righteous. It is but a few glimpses of a boundless subject—a ray here, a gleam there, out of an infinite splendour—which can be attempted. But it will be sufficient, perhaps, to enable me to shed some useful light, first on the organic connection there is between the life of the future and that we are leading here; next, on the essentially spiritual character of the life in heaven; and finally on the natural anxieties of the bereaved as to reunion and human intercourse.

I.

I shall begin with a remark on the form in which this revelation presents itself to a reader of the Gospels. We are so familiar with the fact that Christ brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel, and our minds are so filled with the visions of the future embodied in our hymns, that we are apt to lose sight of another fact, that these are developments of what our Lord actually taught, visions which have grown out of His words, and realities which were as often as otherwise presented in rudimentary forms in His teaching, and have expanded into proportions they had not assumed in His own day. The revelation of heaven, as we now understand heaven, is very far from occupying the foremost place in His teaching. The glad tidings He has to announce is, before everything else, the new dispensation—the change from the old conditions of intercourse between God and man which the Jewish nation was under, and the new conditions which

He came to the earth to establish. The Lord comes preaching a kingdom of heaven upon earth. And this kingdom, in its bearings as an offer and new possibility for the present life, and not the ultimate development of it in a future world, is, judging at first sight, the main concern of the Lord.

In the developments referred to there has been great displacement of the primitive contents of the Gospel. Some things have come forward, some retired into the background. But it is detracting nothing from what is accepted now as revelation of a future world to say, that the record of the Lord's teaching in the four Gospels produces the impression that the change from the one dispensation to the other, from being under the law to being under grace, is in itself a change which is greater, which has more far-reaching consequences than the change from this life to the next.

It is impossible to rightly study the relations between the Baptist and Christ, and not come to see that they belong to a borderland between two worlds, one of which is vanishing, the other only dawning into view. Our Lord incidentally helps us to see and estimate His own view of the immense importance of the new world by the word He dropped out about John:—he was the greatest among the prophets, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven—in the new dispensation—was greater than he. The Lord addressed His words to hearers who had been born into and were wedded to the old dispensation. But there is no wavering in His testimony that its reign is over. He takes every opportunity to place it in contrast with the new state He has come

to inaugurate. He likens it to old bottles and old garments — to things used and worn out and past service; things not fit to receive the new life and truth of the kingdom. A new time announces itself in all His words. New life has come into the world. The kingdom of God for men has come.

Even when the Lord is making what we now describe as gospel offers and offers of salvation, He does not direct those to whom the offers are made to a world beyond the grave, nor does He seem to make anything, as we now do, of death as a dividing line. What seems to be before His mind, what He prominently brings forward in His teaching, is the termination of the old ways of life and worship, and the fulfilment of all they preluded in ways new and divine. It is into the new ways He entreats the crowds who listen to Him to enter. Those new ways, this new dispensation, this kingdom of heaven upon earth—it means new life, new hope for men, for nations, and for the race. Those who take advantage of the invitation, who enter into the new life and come under its impulses, are safe, and shall become fruitful to God and blessed. "Come unto Me," He says, as He stands among the toil-worn and heavy-laden peasants of Judea, "and I will give you rest." He offers to them a boon which expresses to us now one of the most characteristic elements of the life we are looking forward to in the future. But it is plain from the words which follow, that when the offer first fell from His lips those who listened to Him would think of a rest which the Speaker had Himself attained to in this life, and which, if they would learn of Him,

they also might enjoy in the towns and villages of their native land.

The Sermon on the Mount is usually understood to be the formal setting forth of the Lord's designs in coming into the world. It is avowedly an unfolding of the distinction between the old dispensation and the new; and an exposition of the life He came to make possible here—a life whose outcome should be prayer, almsgiving, trust in God, just judgment, and doing to others as we would have others do to us. It is not different in the parables. They are for the most part delineations of a kingdom which was to be established on earth and for human beings in a life that has to be passed on this side of the grave. Only a few refer specifically to the things of the life to come; and of these it may be said, they have a reference as real to the claims and duties of the present state. Take the parable which is understood to touch most directly upon the future life, that of the Rich Man and Lazarus. It does not even profess to take us into that life, but at most into the intermediate state. Although the story evolves into that state, it is not told to set before us the conditions of souls there; but, mainly by symbols taken from that state, or, it may be, from the popular conceptions of that state, to set before us the issues for this life, and the greatness of the reversal of position, which awaited those who on the one hand rejected, on the other accepted, His message. For it is trifling with Christ's word, to take one part of this great parable as symbol and another as history. If it be a parable, it is all symbolic, and "Abraham's bosom," and "hell," and the "torments," and the "great gulf," must

be read as symbols. And so read, the wisdom they give forth is certainly first of all wisdom for the present life. It is the everlastingly impressive story of the possession and misuse of spiritual privilege the whole parable tells. There was the rich man, the religious public of the Jewish nation—the actual possessor of the truth and oracles of God—the only influence then existing that could have been an effective influence for God—not only not using that influence, but using his possessions to foster pride, and sloth, and luxurious luxury; and there at his gate lay the lost world, the world of outcasts and sinners, uncared for, unloved, passed hatefully by. That is the first movement or situation in this drama. The second portrays in symbol what the Lord in plain words says elsewhere. The outcasts, the sinners, the people who are passed by and hated at present, shall come flocking into the kingdom and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and become the people of God, while those that hated them and passed them by shall be left outside; and all this shall take place, not in some far future world only, but here and now on earth. The history of the Christian Church in the world has many fulfilments of this parable among its records.

II.

But it is only the first reading of the Lord's words which leads to the impression that He was speaking only of the present world. As we become familiar with the manifold contents of the Gospel, and are enabled to compare one thing with another, and to give due prominence

to thoughts dimly uttered at the time because the disciples were not yet prepared to receive them, we discover that the revelations of Christ are of the nature of transparencies, and that light from a world beyond the present shines through all His words. Beside the direct references to the present world, and to changes of relationship, position, and influence to be effected here, there are references, not less arresting, to developments and issues which cannot be bounded by time. As soon as we begin to consider practically, and for our own souls, the scope of His invitation and promises, we discover that they cannot be measured by this world. The issues of life, for all to whom He addresses Himself, emerge in the most unmistakable way in a state beyond the present. It is a kingdom not of this world He has come to establish. It is an unseen world whose glad tidings He announces, whose righteous laws He fulfils and commends. His purpose in coming to this world is to tell men the secrets of a world where God is known and perfectly loved, and into which all who believe in that love may enter. Beyond the worlds of Jew and Christian, stand the two worlds of earth and heaven; the world the eye sees and the world the heart yearns after; the world Christ came to save, and the world in whose as yet hidden seclusion are heaped up the treasures with which God is to reward His children, and the Book in which He inscribes their names. It is a state hinted at rather than fully described. The full splendours of it are only to be seen by souls who have been born again, and its horizons are those of the life of God.

What the Great Teacher offers to men belongs to this

unseen eternal world. It is life from heaven, light from heaven, bread from heaven. The rewards He holds up to us are rewards in heaven. It is to a Father in heaven He directs our love. The life He commends to us is the life of this Father in heaven. The obedience He wishes us to attain is the obedience of heaven. Heaven is the dwelling-place of God and of angels. The patriarchs and holy men of other days all live there, live to God there. It is the ultimate home and storehouse of all life here that is lived to God.

Heaven lies at the heart of all His words about His own second coming. The far country to which the King goes, from which at last He returns to take account of His servants, is heaven. It is heaven He refers to when He tells His disciples that He is going to His Father. It is from heaven that "Other Comforter," who is to take His place in His absence, is to be sent. It will be part of the functions of this Comforter to bring to the remembrance of His disciples the hints, the partial revealings, the solitary rays of light concerning this unseen world of which they failed to catch the full significance when they were first given forth by the Lord. And from this world, recalled, discovered, and reconstructed by this help out of fragments of reminiscences, from this unseen world, this home of the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Redeemer shall come back as a bridegroom for his bride, as a king for the revenues of his kingdom, as a brother to gather his brothers about himself, and as a glorious vision of Divine manhood on which shall be seen ascending and descending the angels of God.

That there is not a larger and still more explicit body

of reference to heaven in our Lord's teaching arises from the fact that His revelations are not confined to His words. Heaven is disclosed to us in His person, in His personal experience, and in the surprising events of His life. Not only does this Teacher tell us of bread and life and light from heaven, He is Himself the bread and life and light of which He tells. Not only, as He explained to Nicodemus, is He the only one who could tell of heavenly things, because He alone had come down from heaven, He is Himself the manifestation of heaven. What heaven is in its essentials we may see in His earthly life. In that life He was heaven brought near and opened for the children of men.

III.

What we have seen, then, so far, is this—that our Lord's revelations concerning His kingdom have a two-fold application—an application for the present life and one for the life to come. In this feature of His teaching we touch the fact to which the preceding observations have been leading up, that the heaven revealed to Christian hope is the simple fruition of the salvation offered to faith, that the life and blessedness of the world to come are really the natural development of the life and blessedness attained in this. Christ's kingdom is one and indivisible, and a kingdom of heaven in time as truly as in eternity.

The evidence of this lies broadcast over the entire field covered by the Lord's teaching. Words spoken concerning the condition and possibilities of life here deepen

into visions of the condition and possibilities of life hereafter. Hints are dropped out in an incidental way, which leave a haunting sense of an unseen world in our minds as we read them. Occasional statements, evoked by passing circumstances, open into the very world of spirits. As we read His parables especially, we feel glows of light from heaven falling on our hearts. At last we discover that these hints, occasional statements, and apparently accidental words, burn with a light so steady and shine from so many points, that the entire face of the Gospel is bathed in it, and in its turn gives it forth. It is to an illustration or two of this character I now turn.

Attention was drawn recently to the two half-expressed parables in the Gospel of St. Luke—"The dutiful servant" and "The kind master." In the first, the servant is represented as at work all day in the fields, driving the plough, tending the cattle, and at length returning wearied with his toils to the house. Shall he then sit down and be refreshed? Not yet. He must prepare his master's supper and wait on him. And even then he receives no thanks for his long day's labour. He has but done his duty. He is but an unprofitable servant at the end. In the second parable, however, an entirely new set of circumstances come into view. It is a new scene, with a new atmosphere over it and a new spirit breathing through it. The master has been absent at a wedding and comes home late. The faithful servants, ignorant of the hour of his return, wait up for him and keep the lamps burning, and have their loins girt to go out and meet him. The house lit up; the

table spread; the servants on the watch; then the arrival of the master: these are the various elements in the scene. What does the master in this parable do? He bids the servants who have so faithfully waited for him sit down at the prepared table, and himself comes forth from his chamber to serve them.

Now, no doubt, as in all the teaching of our Lord, the interpretation of those two parables is first of all for the kingdom of heaven here. It is the portrayal of the distinction between duty and grace. But being this, it is more. It carries us beyond the present into the future. It sets two worlds before us: the world of probation, where we have to toil and bear burdens and to wait, and in the end be counted but unprofitable servants; and the world of bliss, where the toiling and faithful servants enter on the joy of their Lord, where the Master serves, and the life of service which they lived on earth is shown to be divine by the very service rendered them by their Lord.

We have a still clearer flash of revelation concerning the world to come in a parable where we might least expect it, that of the Unjust Steward. For one brief moment of his evil history, but a moment supreme in his affairs, this defrauder did what was in itself, indeed, only a just, but in its unexpectedness and effects a merciful act. And he did this just act in circumstances which gave it all the show and effect of a generous and even kind and considerate act. The story requires us to understand that he had previously sent out his bills to the tenants, with his usual extortions added. But now, on his lord's return, now, when his lord has seen

through him and given him notice to leave, he calls the poor farmers into his presence, cancels just so much of their bills as represented his own extortions, just so much as did not interfere with their legitimate debts to the master. It was sunshine after rain to those poor men. At the very moment when they were expecting the return of the master, and the exaction by him of their heavy debt, the debt was suddenly lightened, and brought within limits in which it could be met and paid. They could not be blind to the fact that the steward might have refrained from doing this kindness. They could not fail to think kindly towards him in consequence. All the harshness of the past was blotted out by this unexpected relief—this merciful lightening of their debts. And just to create this kindly feeling towards himself, the shrewdly calculating steward had remitted what was his own extortions in their bills. So to speak, he invested the amount of his intended extortions to secure a shelter to himself in their homes.

Our Lord's application of this parable takes us unmistakably into the future world. What those poor farmers, with their grateful memory of the one just deed, would be to the outcast steward, the poor to whom any kindness has been shown in this life shall be in the life to come to the steward of Christ, by whom it has been done. Deeds of kindness enter into the consciousness and very texture of life, and, both in givers and receivers, reappear in the eternal world. A good Samaritan helping a wounded brother on the way of life here has made that deed, without intending it, an eternal possession. He has put the record of it in the

memory and restored life of the poor sufferer to whom his kindness was done, and drawn, no less, the moral effect of doing it into his own character. These are the divine storehouses that thieves cannot break into nor steal from, in which we are exhorted to lay up treasures now. These are the everlasting habitations in which, when we fail here, we may be received. The kindness done in time is for eternity—it is so much treasure laid up with God. The good works go before the doer, and will be acknowledged and rewarded by God in that future which is but the extension of the present life into the life of heaven.

It is not heresy, this, although it resembles a doctrine held by another religious communion. God is very just. It is an old way of stating that fact to say, that those who give to the poor lend to the Lord. What Christ adds to the old statement is, that the repayment takes place in heaven.

IV.

I have submitted these incidental revelations concerning the future world, partly because they are incidental, that I may show how that world shines behind all that our Lord teaches; partly also because I shall have an opportunity, when illustrating the life of heaven, of bringing forward His more direct and explicit declarations. The practical conclusion of the illustrations adduced is certainly this—that through all the teaching of the Lord runs the great principle that there is a vital connection between the present and the future; that with Christ the future is but the present brought

out to view. As we live now, we shall live then. Living, dying, rising again, we are the same. Even when the Lord is giving direct gleams of the future He brings the life we are leading now into the centre of the light. In the great parable of the sheep and the goats, for example, we are placed at the outset under a perfect blaze of light concerning the future. The heavens have opened; the Son of Man has come in His glory; He is seated on the throne of His glory; He is surrounded by all the holy angels. The light increases in the words of the King to those on His right hand, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Yet how entirely all this becomes, as we read, mere background of light for the scenes depicted in the body of the parable! Our Lord hastens from the opening statements to speak and dwell on the past lives of those who are in His presence. Twice over He discloses the scenes in which those lives had their probation; twice over He enumerates the oneness between Himself and the children of sorrow. And when He comes to speak of the issues that might be expected to carry our thoughts forward into the worlds beyond, solemn though the words are with which they are described, it is not forward on those issues our thoughts brood in the end so much as back on the impressive fact which marks the difference between those two crowds, that what was done in their earthly lifetime, or not done, was done, or not done to Christ, and therein done, or not done, for eternity.

The scene, therefore, on which the Lord concentrates

the attention of His hearers is first of all this world in which they live. But with Him that is a world which is ever passing onwards to a momentous day in the approaching future, in which once more it shall be, but in a different way, as it was when He came first to the earth, when old things passed away and a new world began.

That day is the vestibule of the world to come. And through all His teaching the Lord puts a strong emphasis on the certainty of its approach. He depicts it in aspects which leave their image on all who study His words. It is a fisherman separating the fish in his net, the good from the bad; it is a farmer separating the wheat from the tares at the harvest; it is, as we have just seen, a gathering and dividing of sheep and goats; and it is a bridegroom passing into the banqueting-room with the virgins whose lamps were burning, and a king sitting down to celebrate the marriage of the son with the guests who are dressed in wedding garments. Under all these aspects the event they symbolise remains the same. It is the meeting-point of two eras—the supreme last hour of probation, the supreme first hour of birth into a new condition. So vivid is the portrayal of this event in the Gospels, that it would not be too much to say that the last day has already dawned in the teaching of the Lord, and that its light is even now falling forward on our lives. In that light the human race resembles a mighty host marching towards a judgment throne. The first halting-place will be there. But from thence, and in another world, a new march begins.

It is a comparatively small matter in our Lord's

teaching, whether certain possibilities of good or evil fortune shall emerge for individuals or classes in the unknown world of the future: and there are events, as He reminds us, which are known only to the Father.

But it is everything that men accept from Him the life He has come from that Father to offer, that they yield to its impulses and bring forth its fruits now in this world which they know. The after-life for us all, and for time as much as eternity, is the simple sequence of the life we are leading now.

CHRIST'S REVELATION OF HEAVEN.

THE LIFE OF HEAVEN.

If heaven be, as we have seen, the simple fruition and development of Christian experience here, it is to that experience we should now turn to discover the life that will be led in heaven. And no doubt in this direction we shall learn much of what we wish to know. But not all. Can you foretell the full ears of autumn from the green blades of spring? And happily we are not shut up to this means of discovery. Occasions arose in His ministry which led the Lord to give direct foregleams of the life to come. And it is only necessary to compare those foregleams with Christian experience of His life here, to form a fair conception at least of what is essential in the perfect life to which He has taught us to look forward.

It is a vision of all fair and precious things we come upon in this way: a spiritual vision, indeed, and of things spiritual only; but rich with home features, quick with the action of the primary relations and emotions of our nature, human and practical to the very core.

I.

Direct revelations of the life to come are fuller as the Lord's own life deepens to its close. He sets Himself, in His self-forgetting way, to meet the coming trouble of

His disciples. He was about to leave them. The foretaste of bereavement lay upon their hearts. They would soon be as sheep without a shepherd. Too soon they would have the ache of painful memories, denial, forsaking, and betrayal. The shadows common to our mortal state were beginning to gather around them—and deeper shadows than these—and in these circumstances, the Lord strikes the great key-note of consolation, "Let not your heart be troubled," and tells them of that home to which He was going, from which He would return to receive them to Himself, in which He would gather them all about Him again, the home which they knew and the way which they knew.

Who that has ever experienced the dulness of spiritual apprehension, or the remoteness or vagueness of our vision of heaven, does not feel grateful to Thomas for the words with which he met this announcement? Have not we also stretched our thoughts into the void and cried to the unseen to reveal its secrets? What are the hymns which are so dear to us, "Jerusalem the Golden," "O Paradise, O Paradise," and the like, but witnesses for the very yearning which was in the heart of Thomas? Our ordinary feeling is that we do not know enough of that unseen world, or of the way that leads to it, or of the mystery of the link that binds it to our present lives. And Thomas speaks for us all when he says: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?"

After the manner of the Lord in His teaching, He speaks to the very heart of the felt need at once. Inverting the order of thought in His disciple's question—

putting the "way" first, the "whither" next, He replies: "I am the way . . . no man cometh to the Father but by Me." He was going to the Father. And He was also the way to the Father. Thus rises amid the shadows of life here the great truth that the home which Christ has opened up to us is to be with God. To come to the Father is the last grandest fulfilment of our lives, the one eternal end to which Christ and all things in Christ are leading us—the very goal and ultimate purpose of our Christian faith. The profound reality which underlies these homely words is life with God, admission to the perfect fellowship of God. That is the substance under all the fair names which have been put upon the future world. That is heaven, immortality, blessedness, glory and life eternal. These words mean, at the very heart, eternal fellowship and friendship with God. To know God as a Father, to see Him, to be with Him as children, to stand in the light and power of His love, to have that love flowing into our being, as the sap of a vine flows into its branches, and changing us, and making us at every change more like Himself, and thereby more fruitful in love, so that at last love shall flow back in worship and service to God—that is the grand purpose which Christ came to work out; that is perfect Christian life, and perfectly realised, it is heaven.

II.

The thread which runs through all the Lord's words about the life of heaven, and through the words especially He addressed to His disciples at the close, is this

relation between the Father and His human child. Heaven itself is the Father's house, the place from which the Son Himself has come, to which He is going back; into which He is to gather all His brethren at last; on whose family records are inscribed their names; a home that is a kingdom as well, prepared from the foundation of the world, which the children are to inherit, in which they are to share the joys of the Father and receive rewards from His hand, and where they are to be one with the Father and the Son for ever, even as the Father and the Son themselves are one.

In this way, the most familiar symbol of the future life in our Lord's teaching comes to be the earthly home. And perhaps it is this fact which has narrowed and belittled for so many the conception they have formed of heaven. They transfer the ideal of the earthly home into the future. It is that, or sometimes something even less than that, they wish realised. At any rate, that, or something like that, was the error into which the first disciples fell when the great words fell on their ears: "In My Father's house are many mansions." To them up till that moment, it had been dear old Judea alone which was the Father's house.

All their affections to Christ had grown up beside its lakes and mountains, within its homes and villages. And when He spoke to them of going away, it seemed as if not only the light was going out of their dwellings, but as if God's house was to be left desolate. Abraham, David, and Isaiah had added glory to the house of God, the beloved land of their birth. The songs of psalmists, and the teaching of prophets, and the wonderful mani-

festations of Providence, had made Jerusalem the dwelling-place of God and the joy of the whole earth. And it had been the fond hope of those simple men that their Master had come to add to that glory and make the house more joyful still.

Our Lord carried their thoughts up out of that narrowness, up into the heavenly place to which He Himself was going. He elevated and expanded their conception of the Divine dwelling-place; took them far up out of the little valley in which their views had become straitened, and gave them a vision such as Moses had from Pisgah. "In My Father's house are many mansions."

Not this scene alone, fair though it be, this Palestine, this dear land of our birth, this loved home, this circle of attached friends, this life-long surrounding, not this, nor any similar centre, nor any outward sphere is what our Lord intends when He says, "My Father's house." In these words He opens the door of the unseen universe and bids His disciples gaze into the unsounded depths, the boundless reaches, the manifold fulness, the unending variety of spheres which His Father fills, and which have new openings and expanses and developments for all His children.

It sheds a clear light on the words to read them as part of our Lord's own experience. He had been a baby on Mary's breast: that was a mansion in His Father's house. Then He was a youth under Joseph's loving care: that was a mansion too. And then, He was a soul fighting with the tempter in the wilderness: the wilderness was a mansion as well. Then He was a

teacher, a healer, a comforter of sick folk in the towns and villages of His native land: and this also was a mansion in which He dwelt for a while. Then He had the inner circle of His disciples' fellowship, and here and there a home like the home in Bethany, and sometimes a lodging in the night solitudes, under the silent stars: those too were mansions. A little while longer and He shall be on the cross: and that also, strange to say, will be a mansion in the Father's house. And then He must lie in the silent grave: and there also He shall dwell in a house which His Father built for Him. But after that, He shall ascend to His Father, and to the light of that Father's love, and in the shelter of that He shall dwell for evermore.

It is out of a heart filled with that expansive experience and prospect He says, "In My Father's house are many mansions." The present environment of His people is but for a time. It is a house by the way, a mansion which is but one of a series. There are new surroundings, new spheres along all the ever-ascending path.

III.

When we turn from the dwelling-place to the dweller to discover the life which is to be lived in heaven, the very first element which appears is joy. The life of earth, with its shadows and sorrows, is behind—the life of heaven begun. And joy salutes it at the very gateway: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Not for the first time have joy and the soul encountered. Joy entered into the heart before; but now the heart enters a

kingdom which is filled with joy. We only taste joy here—

> "Joys here are drops that passing flee;
> But there, an overflowing sea."

And what we there enter upon is the joy of our Lord. Who can tell what that is? His delights are with the children of men. There is joy in His presence when souls are brought from sinful ways into the way of life. It was for the joy set before Him, the joy of seeing a lost world reclaimed, that Christ endured the cross. But these are only rays let forth to tell us of the full light beyond. We may be sure, it will be joy going forth on holy objects, on righteous deeds, on happy growths, on beautiful forms, on truth and charity. The great fact is, that it is the joy of God. To the pleasures which are a delight to Him, the very joys of the eternal heart, the children of God shall be admitted. Let us stir up our sluggish imagination that we may catch some faint reflection of this fact. The flush of spring, the brooding heat of summer, the songs of birds, the love of home, the play of childhood, the peace that flows from the forgiveness of sin, the satisfaction of seeing evil overcome, the delights of well-doing: these are reflections, although only far-off reflections, of the eternal joy.

It brings us nearer to the reality to recall the pleasure of the Father in Christ. This joy in the Son who came to do His will in giving eternal life to every one who should believe in Him, and who was faithful in doing it unto death, who went near to the outcast and the lost with His mighty gift that He might save them, and at last died to make the gift sure for them: this was a real

outflow of the joy of Heaven. Into all that joy shall the soul enter to whom it shall be said: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

IV.

The joy of God! That is one side of the reality: the other is that it is the Father's joy in the heart and life of the child. And here we come into the presence of a great secret of the blessedness of Heaven. Looking to one aspect of God we have learned to speak of Him as the Ancient of Days; but there is an aspect as real which justifies us in thinking of Him as the Eternal Youth. The life of heaven is a life of eternal youth. There is neither age nor decay in the life which God leads, but a fresh-springing flow of the strength and joyousness of youth. And such will be the life of His children in the world to come. Many a time, no doubt, the Lord repeated among His disciples the words of Psalm ciii., "Thy youth is renewed as the eagle's," where the glad strength and upsoaring power of the eagle are used to set forth this very fact. But He brings it in the most explicit way into His teaching as well. Those passages where He commends the spirit of childhood and advances its life as the type of the life to which knowledge of God and entrance into the kingdom are promised, are prophecies as much as illustrations. Heaven is opened to us in the life, trust, innocence, and joy of children. "Such is the kingdom of heaven." It is in one aspect the central fact concerning the life of heaven. Its freshness, newness, spontaneousness, springing up as water in

a living spring does, lifting up its face to the Father for its supplies: all these are included in its youthfulness. It is life strong with the strength of youth, free from care and without the root from which care springs; life to which all things are new, which sees itself at every step in a new wonderland, which takes no anxious thought for the morrow, which enjoys the present because the present is set for it in the light of God. It is a life that does not grow old, that is incorruptible, that abides for ever. Our present life advances by inevitable marches over all powers of our being to decay, to death. Everything is at last touched by the spoiler. Moths waste; thieves break in and steal. But the life of heaven—of which a child's is the type—advances ever to more perfect forms of the youth, strength, and joyousness of God.

V.

The joy of eternal youth! The secret of this part of our hope is the fact that the life we are to inherit in heaven is the life of our Father who is in heaven. It is life our Lord invites us to in the gospel: and it is at last into life those who accept His invitation enter. Life—"life eternal" our Lord calls it. This is not immortality only, although we often, by putting a narrow meaning into the words, think of it as that. It is the life we know of as salvation. This occupies a great place in the Lord's teaching, and underlies what He offers to us under the symbols of His flesh and blood, and bread, and water, and light. It is life. It is the life which has the open vision, which sees the kingdom,

which has the opening word, which can enter into the kingdom, the Divine password at the lines between earth and heaven. And it is the life of God: the life He poured out into Christ for us; the life which the Son brought near to us and made over to us; the life which carried Him through all His trials and into His conquests; the life which the miracles expressed, which gave forth the parables, which uttered wondrous words of invitation, which went near to outcasts, which had fellowship with the Father in joys of service, in agonies of prayer, whose home was God, and which Christ carried with Him when He returned to that home.

It is the very life which God lives, which He has always lived, which He will always live—the eternal life. Let us not be surprised that we find it difficult to apprehend the eternity of this life. Eternity is not a subject of which it is easy to think. We are on a very narrow line of the track when we are trying to conceive of it as mere prolongation of time, duration without end. Duration no doubt lies somewhere in the texture of it—but only as a single thread. Beginning and ending are ideas foreign to the idea of eternity. It is far more the opposite of that which has beginning and ending than the extension or prolongation of it. Time and space are laws of our being, but they are not laws of the being of God. His life does not unfold as ours like beats of a clock, in pulses of the heart, in events; but as a perpetual Here and Now. It is idle to try to explain it. All we can affirm with certainty is, that it is a life in which change, death, and succession of events have no place. It is the life we know the manifestations of

as spirit, holiness, goodness, long-suffering, mercy, and truth. But whatever further developments of it there may be—whatever blooms and powers unknown hitherto it shall yet put forth—into a child's share of these, and into all not yet conceivable which the life may be, they shall be admitted who in the present world have possession of the life of Christ.

VI.

In their anticipations of heaven the Christians of the Middle Ages made much of the Beatific Vision. To them this was the fulfilment of life, the crown and glory of all that can be experienced. Having attained to this, the grand end was reached. But in the teaching of the Lord this is not an end, but a beginning—the pure heart of the child coming into the light of the presence which is to be strength and joy to it in all its after service. The vision Christ promises to those who accept Him includes admission into the kingdom as much as sight of it. It is nearness to God, the nearness which kinship and fellowship reach, and specially that nearness to which He Himself admits us. I am recalling, as I say this, that aspect of the vision which our Lord discloses in the prayer He offered with His disciples: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me." For saints in glory this will probably always be the vision of God. Then as now, the Father may veil His face. We shall hear His voice, we shall see His footprints, we shall know

ourselves to be in a world where everything tells of His love; but the very glory of that presence, His person, the vision of Him as we might have of a fellow-creature—the only approach to this we are justified in expecting is the vision to which we shall be admitted when we shall see that glory disclosed in the face of Jesus Christ.

VII.

We are accustomed to think of heaven as a place of rewards. Nothing more clearly exhibits the spiritual character of its life than the rewards mentioned by our Lord. Open acknowledgment of secret prayer; comfort after persecution; increase of faculties of well-doing to those who have well used them on earth: a vision of God to the pure in heart:—these and such as these are the traits of the future life which our Lord brings forward when speaking of rewards. But once or twice His teaching is so wrapped up in symbol that it may be well to pause for a little on one or two of them, and disentangle the truths they enclose. A strife had arisen among the disciples as to which should be the greatest. And let me say in passing that this strife is not so evil a thing as at first sight it seems to be. What it reveals is much more the childish inexperience of the disciples than what we should call ambition. Just before the strife arose, the Lord had told that one of them was to betray Him. Straightway arose the questioning as to which of them it could be. Who so base, so unfaithful, as to do that evil? Their strife is the mere rebound from this questioning—the mere next step in a natural

enough process of reasoning; it is the question, Which of us shall prove *most* faithful? So like children they still are! Well, in connection with that conversation our Lord says, what I am anxious to show the meaning of—"I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me! that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

A table with meat and drink upon it. And thrones of judgment! Here are symbols which might easily set the mind on material visions of the future. But we have only to bring them into the light of other places in Scripture where these very symbols, or the realities they refer to, are mentioned, to see how spiritual those realities are. All through the Bible a table is the symbol of fellowship with God, of sharing His life, and of the joy which there is in this sharing of His life. The thirty-sixth Psalm assures us that those who take refuge in God shall eat of the fatness of God's house and drink of the river of His pleasures; and the meaning there can only be that they shall be satisfied with what satisfies Him, and glad wherein He is glad. Our Lord Himself makes clear to us, in those passages in which He speaks of our eating His flesh and drinking His blood, that it is to spiritual realities, to truth concerning Him, and to such fellowship in His life as we can enter by faith, that He is referring. And just this is the essential reality of the life in heaven which He holds up to His as yet dimly apprehending disciples, under the symbol of the table in His kingdom at which they were to eat and drink.

But what elements underlie the symbol of the judgment thrones? First of all, the element which we know in our present life as prayer; and next, the element of spiritual discernment. The life in heaven, as we have already seen, is but the development of the life God's people are leading here. And here, on this side of the grave, He has admitted His people to a share with Himself in the government of the world. By their prayers they move the hand that moves the world. It is to them He has committed the great educative trust of spiritual influence by which Christian opinion is to be formed. They come to God bringing their own wants to His fulness and the world's need as well. They come asking help to do His will, asking Him to put forth His power through the instruments He has chosen. Prayer in this light is just spiritual suffrage. And it is only in the sphere of Christian prayer where a word sometimes used in ordinary politics is perfectly true—that the *Demos* is *Rex*. Christ has conferred kingship on His people, has placed them even in this life on His throne. Prayer means the recording of a vote—the presenting of a petition—in the government of His kingdom; prevailing prayer is an actual share in that government. And judgment is simply the moral condition of such prayer. Judgment on the evil in the world, on evil deeds, on evil ways, belongs to the very action of Christian thought. There will be no formal thrones—no visible judgments; but there will be for all who are true to Christ here, and are faithful unto death, the perfect fruition and action of what we now know as prayer and discerning of spirits.

VIII.

Rest, I need hardly say, will be a great element in the life of heaven. It is one which many circumstances of our earthly life tend to make us think of as material. "Rest to the weary," we say, as the spent frame of our beloved quietens down into death. But the rest which Jesus promised to those who "labour and are heavy laden" was rest for the soul. It was the rest which He Himself had found for His own soul, and the secret of attaining it He disclosed from His own experience as a Son.

As a Son serving the Father He also laboured and was heavy-laden. His earthly life was fulfilled under all the burden of oppression and injustice which then lay upon His native land, and under the common burdens which lie at all times on the life of man. And He laboured and was heavy-laden in a special way in the great work of our redemption, and when He took our sins and infirmities upon His soul, "a weary man and full of woes." From what was outward and material in those burdens He never passed. He felt the pressure of injustice, the physical weariness, the heat, the burden, the pain, the shame, to the very end; but He felt them as one who had escaped from their power to hurt. Under all pressure and anguish of them He was in possession of the rest which is a rest of the soul. What He invited those who listened to Him to do, He Himself had done. He had escaped from the burdens of earth, and entered into rest by entering into a knowledge of

the Father. He placed Himself in the Father's hands in the joy of this knowledge; He virtually said, My Father's will shall be My yoke. And from that moment peace was present, flowing like a river in the soul, and making glad the city of God within. That was the rest He offered to those who heard Him in Judea. That is the rest He offers to all who hear the gospel still, "Assume the yoke which I assumed; learn of Me, and act as I have acted; be meek and lowly in heart before God, accepting all His rule in all things that touch your life; lay yourselves low at the feet of God; receive pain and sickness, and, if need be, mockery and scourging and death, as coming from Him, and you shall find rest unto your souls."

Nothing other, in the essence of it, than this is the rest that remains for us in heaven. It is the resting of filial hearts on the heart of God—a sweeter, fuller resting, simply because there will there be a fuller vision of the character, a more uninterrupted experience of the love of God. The deepest ache of the human spirit here arises from ignorance of the character of God; its deepest peace is in a true acquaintance with that character. Heaven is, more than anything else, the full unveiling of the Father's love. To know that love here, to be assured that we are loved—unworthy though we be—with a love that will not change, and that He who loves us is our Father reconciled, who has forgiven all our sins—that is heaven begun. The rest that remaineth in heaven for the people of God is just a richer, deeper experience of that joy.

IX.

I should be doing injustice to our Lord's teaching if, after speaking of rest, I did not hasten to add that it is a life of service which His revelations concerning heaven open up to our view. It has been made a reproach by scoffers that we have brought ideals of heaven into our hymns which are only projections into the future of poor forms of congregational worship. But this is a reproach which discovers far more poverty of thought in those who indulge in it, than poverty of imagination in those who formed the ideal at which they mock. All worship is service, and the worship of a congregation of redeemed souls may turn out to be the most acceptable service which can be rendered to God. It is a remarkable fact that our Lord has set the loftiest ideal of heaven He has portrayed in the heart of an act of worship. It is in the Lord's Prayer He opens the vision of a world in which God's will is done so as every worshipper of God would wish it done upon earth. And it is service which has a large element of worship in it which is disclosed in that Word concerning Himself: "It is my meat and my drink to do the will of God." Service, obedience, bringing forth of fruit, the doing of the Father's will—is the law of all the varieties of life which pass before us in His portrayal of the kingdom. At the doorway of the new developments of that kingdom, He depicts groups of servants receiving additional talents for future service. Rulers who have been faithful over a few cities are advanced

to larger governments. And the very purpose for which He goes away from the disciples into the unseen kingdom of the Father is, that He may prepare new spheres of service for them—"I go to prepare a place for you."

But this is a subject concerning which details have been withheld. We can only say—taking our Lord's own life as light—that heaven will include activities such as that life displayed. There will be ample scope. The same interest in children which our Lord displayed may surely be expected in a world where more than the half of all who live in it will be of that class. There, also, there will be disciples to be instructed. The multitudes who have passed into heaven when they had only caught the first glimpses of redeeming love will have to be led into the fulness of the truth. Higher and lower, advanced and less advanced, teacher and taught—those relations abide. Faith and hope can never cease to serve the Lord, or to have spheres of service among souls who have entered into bliss under every possible variety of attainment and age. There, as here, it will still be service to love one another. Love could not be love without going forward into new spheres, new services, new fruit-bearing for God.

It may be, that as the elements of active service are developed on earth, the passive elements may have their time of activity in heaven. It is an old distinction concerning the Church—here militant, there triumphant. The souls whom God shall gather about His throne will have much to learn concerning God Himself, will still feel that they are but children in the knowledge even of His works. The life which on earth served God by

putting into words the Song of the Lily and the Bird will have abundant scope for continuance in such service in a world all new, which it shall study with hearts and eyes new touched by the power of God. It is certain that somewhere in the future we shall once more enter Paradise, and be placed, as our first parents were, in the Garden of God; and in the new garden, as in the old, in ways known as yet only to God, we shall be set "to dress it and keep it" for Him.

INTERCOURSE IN HEAVEN.

SHALL we know each other in heaven? Will the affections and friendships of earth survive the separation of the grave? Will there be renewal of the home ties, of the old ways of thinking, the old feelings, and mutual services, which make so much of the joy of life here?

Questions like these will continue to be put as long as homes are made desolate by bereavement. It is an evidence of the depth and sincerity of our faith in immortality that we put them; and it would be strange indeed if there were no replies to them in the revelations of our Lord.

Yet the replies do not come forth in the same explicit way as the questions do. What is natural for us to ask is not always good for us to know. To-morrow is veiled from our view here. The same reasons which have determined this condition may be good to hide from us the circumstances of the life to come; and, in any case, our asking must always be narrower than the facts that answer to it in a world so much greater than the present as heaven.

It will be well, therefore, to enter on these inquiries with modest expectations. No private gate opens into these secrets of the future, and it is not good to be wise above what is written.

I.

And it so happens that we have to start from a fact which, at first sight, seems to discourage our going farther. This is the fact that the dominating and all inclusive relationship in the social life of heaven will be relationship to Christ. It will be a greater circumstance of that life to find ourselves related to Christ than to recognise or be recognised by the former companions of our life here, however dear those companions may have been to us. Even in respect of the affections which went out on those companions, it will be a greater joy to find the dear objects of them related to Christ than to have the old relations with ourselves renewed. Intercourse with Christ will be central to all the intercourse of heaven. Our Lord was disclosing the principle of this intercourse when He declared that the relations He sustained to His mother and brethren were subordinate to those between His disciples and Himself: "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father who is in heaven, the same is My brother, and My sister, and My mother."

Let us try to understand these words. They were uttered at a critical moment of our Lord's ministry. The malice of His enemies was deepening into conspiracy against His life. It had reached the stage in which they tried to make out that He had the dangerousness of a man out of His mind; and just at this stage they succeeded in drawing His kinsfolk into their views. Hitherto, with the exception of His mother, the Lord's kinsfolk had stood aloof, had disowned Him; but now, moved by the

spreading excitement, they will assert their natural rights over Him—they will lay hold of the madman and put Him under restraint. The Lord was sitting in a circle which had never disowned Him, when word was passed on to Him over the heads of the crowd that these kinsfolk had come. He did not hesitate as to the words He should use; neither did He stop to ask for what purpose, having stood aloof so long, they had come now; He simply looked round upon the friends who had sympathised with Him and followed Him, and opened their houses to Him, and said of these—and surely it was a most natural thing in the circumstances to say—"Behold My mother and My brethren." Here in this loving, hospitable circle, when Nazareth and all Judea shut Him out, He found brother and sister and mother.

But now, as His manner was, when He had uttered a word which had its first significance and application in the circumstances in which it was spoken, He did more —He developed it, gave it a significance beyond the immediate moment, turned it—as every simplest word He uttered could be turned—towards what was eternal and universal, and brought out from the heart of it this great, new, far-reaching principle—that the relations between Himself and those who do the will of His Father are the abiding relations of the kingdom of heaven." "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My mother, and My sister, and My brother." It is nothing less than a foregleam and prefiguration of heaven. It is the world we look up to when we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It is the very kingdom Christ came to open to all believers, the sphere whose law and life and

joy is the doing of the will of God, and all whose intercourse is rooted in relationship to Him who is the one perfect Doer of that will, and therefore the Elder Brother and bond of union there.

See, next, what this implies in respect of Christ's relationship to us. It is not only that we shall range up close to Christ, and have joy in the knowledge that we are in the same family circle, and are looking up to the same Father; but it is that Christ shall fit Himself into our old relationships, and make Himself brother, child, husband, friend. Not only shall Christ be the centre of attraction and love in heaven: we shall be brothers, sisters, mothers to Him. "The same is My mother, and My sister, and My brother."

II.

What loving developments are possible, even in Christian life here—which is only heaven begun—under the free play of this gracious law! Here is a quiet home in a wealthy commercial city, in which a widowed mother with one son and daughter live. The boy is gifted, and gateways to a splendid career in the city have been opened up to him by his father's friends; and the comforts and splendours of the days when the father was still alive are visible in the future to which any of those gateways lead. But, the other Sunday, a great hero from the foreign mission field was in the pulpit of the church they attend. He stirred their conscience, their heart; he placed the claims of the heathen world before them in an arresting way; he sent out, as from the

heart of Christ, the Divine call for workers: "Who will go for us?" And the appeal went home. Mother, sister, brother—all their hearts were moved. Who will go? The call keeps sounding in their hearts. At last the young man comes to his mother and sister, and says, "The Lord is calling me." And now begins to work that mystery which Christ came into the world to reveal —the mystery of self-renunciation. Shall the splendid commercial prospects be let go? Shall the hope of returning to the old comforts be given up? It is a sacrifice for the mother and sister as much as for the son. He will not go if they refuse their consent. He is loyal to their natural claims upon him; but he has placed the whole matter before them, and left it in the hands of God. A matter like this is not to be decided in a day. Days, nights, weeks of prayer are spent over it; but at last the decision is for God. The mother has given her son, the sister her brother, to the Lord, and they have blessed him and let him go; and now he is on his way to hardship, to service in a distant field, perhaps to an early death.

But now, in respect of those two at home, those women now so lone. Is it only loss they have come into the experience of through this surrender of their dearest, this faithful acting out of the life which we have spoken of as heaven begun? Far from that; it is unspeakable gain. In ways only experience can help the soul to understand, Christ comes into the place of the young missionary, comes as a child into the mother's heart and meets her motherly yearning with filial love, and into the sister's heart and meets her sisterly yearning with fraternal love. The home may be as poor as before, in

earthly goods may be poorer; but there is a light from heaven in it, and it is all over touched with a glory it did not know before. Enter: the mother is opening a letter from her son; mother and daughter seem to be alone in their joy—two solitary women. But it is not so. A third, unseen, is in their company: Christ is there. And one of these two is now mother to Him and one His sister; for He has become a son to her who gave up her son, a brother to her who gave up a brother, to His work.

III.

No doubt, in any first statement of the operations of this law, whether with respect to this life or the life to come, it will seem as if we must suffer a certain loss. And to those who have been bereaved and who are looking forward to the better life for happy reunions, it will especially seem as if the dear ones of earth must be less to them than they were here. They shall find them again, but not the same. They shall find them members of wider circles, and quick with the affections of the relationship in which all then shall stand to Christ.

Yet why should any who have had experience of the relationship in which His people stand to Christ here fear for even a shade of disappointment in the future? What they shall then discover, Christ has been preparing them for, from the moment when the first faint shadow of coming bereavement fell on their homes. What is that first approach of the great shadow so much as the putting of the question by the Lord, "Wilt thou trust Me to the end? wilt thou give up thy beloved to Me?" And

what is the almost inevitable first word of the bereaved, when all is over? It is the answer to Christ's question: "It has seemed good unto Thee, O Saviour; not my will, but Thine be done." But this is the very foretaste of the discovery I am pointing forward to. It is the very experience of the new relationship in germ. The bereaved have bent their wills to the will of the Lord; they have surrendered their hold, have given up their dearest. Christ henceforth is looked upon by them as the possessor of those on whom their hearts went forth. And for them heaven will be the manifestation of those surrenderings, those tender self-renouncements. They shall meet, they shall recognise the old ties; but it will be with a something added, a something new. The relationship to Christ will come in—shall I say between?—no, it will come in as a girdle of new love; of love sweeter, holier, more abiding than they knew on earth—a love that shall bind them first of all to Christ, but through Him and in Him to each other for evermore.

The old relations shall pass into the new light of the kingdom, not to be dissolved, but transfigured. The law of losing our life that we may find it shall have its last and happiest demonstrations in heaven. We shall surrender father and mother, sister, brother, and friend, wife, husband, and child, but it will be to receive them back again a thousandfold fairer than before, clothed with the radiance of their new relationship to Christ.

These surrenderings shall be acts of spontaneous, joyous love—natural outcomes of the life of Christ in the soul; the most natural acting out of the principle which was in the heart of the Saviour on the Cross—the greatest

principle of life—that of self-renunciation. And just as with Christ in His sufferings, our renunciations also shall be acts of worship and consecrations to higher and nobler life.

IV.

And now, carrying the light of this great principle in our hearts, let us return to the homely and natural questions of sorrow with which we set out. The relationship to Christ, we have just seen, will be more to us than our relationship to each other; but what, in that case, shall our relationship to each other be?

The reply to this question must be sought, first, in the resurrection of our Lord; next, in the resurrection period of His ministry,—in the appearances among His disciples during that period, and in the character of their intercourse.

The forty days of that period are not like other days for the disciples. The glow of heaven is upon them. A new world has suddenly opened its wonders to them. Heaven as it is to be is by their side. And although their eyes are holden that they can only see faint glimmerings of the splendour, real responses to the natural yearnings of our heart as to the future, and most real consolation for the deepest sorrows of our life, are disclosed in the things they attained to see.

Let us recall the circumstances of those days, and endeavour to place our spirits as much as possible under those first gleams of the intercourse of heaven.

The disciples were in the shadow of a bereavement in which almost every pang that can enter into the sorrow

which bereavement occasions had taken hold of them. Their beloved Teacher was dead. There was the vision of new worth in Him, which death had brought out to view. There was the aching sense of a very precious possession cruelly snatched from their side. There was the pain of the disruption of the dear ties which had bound them so long to the Master and each other. There was the old mystery of the righteous man perishing from the earth; and there was the sorrowful consciousness of failure on their own part—the forsaking and denial—in the hour of their Master's extremity.

It was under the impulse of the simplest element in this grief that the women of the company took their sweet spices to the grave. In this way they would show the last proof of their admiration and loyalty for the Teacher who had brought light into their lives, and whom they loved with a love which death could not kill. And it was to their simple and true love the first revelation of the new state of things was made. To poor women—among the poorest, perhaps, as to outward circumstances in all Jerusalem that morning—the greatest wonder in human history was first disclosed. The body they came to anoint was gone; and, before their amazement and trouble on that account had subsided, a form appeared in the morning light, a familiar voice uttered a name, a veil dropped from their eyes, and they were in the presence of the very Object of their love.

The Lord's foretellings of His resurrection had not been understood. The event came upon the disciples as a surprise. The women who went to the grave and found it empty did certainly not expect to find it empty.

Surprise, excitement, and awe are visible in the conduct of John and Peter as they came in haste to test the truth of the strange tidings brought by the women. The unbelief of Thomas later on only gave an intenser expression to a feeling that, at first, was publicly shared by all the circle of the disciples. Hence the means the Lord took to lodge the fact of His resurrection in the faith of the disciples :—His successive appearances to those who were afterwards to be witnesses of the event, and His gracious patience and painstaking with Thomas himself.

Now the facts we are in search of are those of resurrection life. Whatever foretaste of heaven may be experienced between death and the resurrection, it is not yet the fulness of the experience of heaven. Although our Lord said to the penitent on the cross, "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise," and although, without doubt, on that very day, the poor pain-racked, crime-stained sufferer was admitted into the very shelter his Saviour pronounced, it was not heaven into which he was admitted. Christ Himself did not on that day ascend to heaven. "I am not yet ascended," He said to Mary in the garden. Heaven is the world of the risen dead. We are not left to think, therefore, of disembodied spirits when looking forward to reunion with dear inhabitants of that world. It is man clothed with the resurrection body our Lord has in view in all His revelations concerning the future. He links the promise of resurrection with present possession of His life. The day on which that promise is to be fulfilled is the meeting point between the worlds of time and eternity. Heaven in its full fruition begins that day.

V.

In the very fact of resurrection, therefore, light begins to be shed on our inquiries. It is not renewal, it is rising again which is our hope. Resurrection implies identity. We shall be in the future the very persons we appeared to those who loved us in the past. "Behold My hands and My feet; it is I Myself." Our form shall, in whatever as yet unknown way, be still human. Whatever difference may be wrought in the bodies we are to inhabit, bodies we shall certainly have. The old lineaments shall still be preserved. There will be change—all the change which the disciples were aware of in the new appearance of the Lord, all the change which Paul speaks of as from natural to spiritual —but the lives which rise clothed in these new forms shall be recognisable as the very objects which were known to us in their previous mortal personality and shape.

The risen Jesus was heaven revealed. As it was with Him it will be with the departed who have fallen asleep in Him. Nothing was changed in Him that was essential to continuance of the old intercourse, the old tasks, the old loves. He did not leave His affections for the disciples in the grave, nor any interest in their lives He ever had, nor the interest He had in the mission to which He had called them in this world. Nothing essential in His life or affections was changed; not His love—He is seen loving His disciples to the end; not His humanity —He sends that message of human heartedness to His

disciples by Mary, "Go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father, and your Father." The only change, if change there was, showed itself in the more tender outflow of His human feelings, as if these came forth now touched with a clearer and more loving accent of heaven. And it seems, therefore, clear vision and teaching concerning the condition of our own intercourse in the future. Nothing essential in those we love, or in us, shall be changed. As Jesus rose, so shall those rise who share His life. As He appeared after His resurrection, so shall His people appear. Their moral being shall be the same. Death can work no change in their love. The loves we die with we shall rise with; and love without its objects would not be heaven. Our loves, our human feelings, our friendships, sanctified and purified by grace, and our interest in the things spiritual of others, and in Christ's cause—the stamp of eternal life is upon these things; they are immortal; they shall awake when we awake; they shall reappear in the new state quick with the life of God.

One consequence from this fact touches a very tender experience of domestic sorrow. The children whom death has taken shall be restored as children. It would be difficult to express in words the full joy of this hope. Death lets drop his shadow on the darling life. An agony unspeakable enters the heart of the mother. Flesh of her flesh, heart of her heart, was this child. It had lain on her breast; it had looked up into her eyes as into the eyes of God; it had won sweet places in her hopes—in her affections. And now? It seems as if life were broken in two—the mother mourning for her

child and refusing to be comforted. She may go to the child—the child can never come back to her. But for this very mother, in the fact of our Lord's resurrection, and of ours after His, shines the fullest, richest consolation. Not only shall mother and child be together again, love with the old love, be satisfied with the old cleaving to each other; not only shall death, which could not destroy the brotherhood of the Saviour, not prevail to destroy the motherhood of the mother, but the links between mother and child shall reappear, touched for ever with the light of those higher relations already referred to, in which both her child and she stand to Christ; and each shall be fairer and more precious for the other, that both were once parted and are now set in the relations of a life over which death has no longer power.

VI.

It is full of light for us, that the risen Lord appeared only to His followers. So far as revelation by His resurrection is concerned, it might be said that He rose in the bosom of the circle in which He had previously dwelt. His social circle was unchanged.

Our circles also shall be the same. Although we are not the children of circumstances, circumstances make the framework and setting of our lives. We shall rise linked to the circles we have dwelt in here. Our probation lay in these. There we were prepared by grace, both by joys and griefs, for the wider circles of heaven.

If there were to be no renewal of the old relations in

our social circles, the life problem of many a soul could never be solved, nor life itself fulfilled.

Travellers have told us of their thoughts as they passed along the silent streets of Pompeii, and how their imaginations went back upon the awful moments when sudden death fixed in an eternal shape the very looks, motions, and forms of the doomed citizens. But death comes as much as a surprise to mankind generally as to the citizens of old Pompeii, and it has the same terrible power of perpetuating the mood, the form, the acts, the seeming failures, the seeming shortcomings of life; and it does this for Christian as much as for all other kinds of life. It would be a Divine work left incomplete, therefore, if an opportunity were not provided to show the fulfilment of those still unfulfilled lives. Heaven will bring out these hidden secrets of the work of grace upon the soul. Heaven will be the fulfilment of lives which have failed here, the unravelment of lives which had not consciously reached their secret here, the reconcilement of lives which did not understand each other here. The time of fruition in many a life cannot be until it unfolds in the light of heaven. Crowns shall sit on many a brow there which was pierced with thorns here; joy lodge in many a heart filled with sorrow here; and fruits of sacrifice, toil for Christ, and answers to prayer shall be seen for the first time amid the things seen in heaven. Many a patriot has worn out his life in conflict with some social foulness or wrong, and died without seeing a break in the clouds. The glory he looked for here will be found in heaven. Many a humble teacher has dropped his seed in lonely places among lonely hearts,

and seen no harvest before his change. He shall find the harvest in heaven.

What I have just said has had its suggestion and justification in the facts of our Lord's intercourse with the disciples during the forty days. How entirely different, for example, the life of Mary of Magdala looks in the light which falls on it in those days! The greatest message but one ever committed to human lips was committed to this faithful soul, who yet in her lifetime had been a painful sufferer, and had had also to bear scorning for her love to Christ. And see how the Lord deals with the disciples. His first care after the Resurrection is for them—His first anxiety, to send healing to their sorrow. They had not been to Him the faithful companions which He had been to them. They forsook Him in His hour of sorrow, but His loving and gracious heart covers the multitude of their imperfections. He clothes them in His own loyalty. He remembers their good, and not their evil. They had believed in Him when others cast Him out. They had left their all to follow Him. These are the things He remembers in this light of resurrection life. His first desire is to gather about Him once more those sharers of His sorrows and joys.

And with what splendid generosity He foreshows in His treatment of them the heightening of life which awaits all His people in the social circles of heaven! "Go to My brethren," He said to Mary. It was the first time He had called them brethren. Other names, endearing also in their measures, He had greeted them by—disciple, servant, friend, but never till now by the name of brother. With all their imperfections they were

truly friends. Christ had raised them to that power of sympathy with Him in His work, in which friendship with Him consists; but now they were to be more than friends. The friend is to blossom up into the brother. And herein lies the generosity of bestowing this name now. Christ's victory is completed now. His life is crowned by the Divine power with its resurrection glory. And now when He appears one with eternity and God, now in the light of the eternal world, He sends His gracious message—"Mary, go to My brethren."

VII.

The death of a righteous man is a great mystery. It seems to me that the Lord intended to throw light on the future unravelment of this mystery by what took place on the road to Emmaus. The two who on the afternoon of the day He had risen were journeying thither were perplexed by this very mystery. The death of their Master was for them the blighting of a hope which had the sanction of God's own Word—"We trusted it had been He who should have redeemed Israel." It was also the mystery of an unrighteous death—"The chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him." While their hearts were dark with these shadows the Lord joined them, entered into conversation with them, and out of the very Scriptures which had sustained their hope, met their thoughts and showed them that the event which was oppressing them lay in the very pathway of the Divine purpose, and that only by means of it could

God's designs for Israel and mankind be carried out. It was no wonder they said to this wondrous Expounder, "Abide with us—fast falls the eventide." The light in which they found themselves when they raised trembling eyes to their Guest, was the light of that same Presence in which life's mysteries shall be made plain to ourselves when we are seated at the table, and are breaking the bread of the eternal world.

VIII.

Our greatest perplexities, in looking forward to reunion, are those which have their root in our experience and consciousness of imperfection and failure in the unions of our earthly life. But there is nothing more tender in the intercourse between the Lord and His disciples during those closing days than His disclosures concerning perplexities of the kind. Twice He seems to have set Himself to deal with them. First when He appeared where the disciples were assembled with shut doors for fear of the Jews; and next, when He met them on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, and had His touching colloquy with Simon Peter.

On the first occasion He showed them His hands and His side, and said, "Peace be unto you." Luther saw the whole wonder of redemption in this transaction—the cross, the pardon, the life eternal. We may well see in it at least the assurance of reconciliation between Himself and the disciples who forsook Him and fled. This great proof of the love for them—the marks of His suffering—He showed them, burying thereby the past,

of which they were ashamed, and by His words endowing them with a new power of life for the future. On the next occasion He appeared on the shore of the lake, when His disciples were disheartened with failure in their search for food, and when the breaking heart of His servant Peter was to be comforted. His sympathy with the former in their toiling, His lifting of the latter out of his anguish into the joy of pardon and new service, are real glimpses of the obliterations and reconciliations which await His people in the world to come. Let us try to understand how light is shed by these glimpses on the perplexities to which I have referred.

One great purpose of Christ's coming into the world was the sanctification and perfection of the domestic affections. One of the most visible effects of His religion has been the leavening of home life with sympathy, self-sacrifice, and love. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit that our earthly affections receive a heavenly impulse, so that we are enabled to love each other in Christ. Like everything else in our Christian life, this received a power of quickening on the cross. The Lord's love to His mother was one of the last-shown emotions of His human life. And certainly there is nothing in our Christian life on which, to judge by the pathetic scenes of the death-chamber, Christian influence more tenderly, and to the very end, rests, than domestic love. It is the law of Christian influence to perfect what it loves. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." Fair though our domestic affections seem when compared with other things in our earthly life, they are, in the light of our ideal life, and

on this side of the grave, far from perfect. We have frail hearts; we live in a world where purposes cross each other; we are poor, uncertain creatures, even at our best. It is but natural to wish that this fair possession of our human life may emerge in circumstances in which it will have a better chance to reach perfection. Our natural yearning will be for a world in which there shall be not clouds of misunderstanding, or narrowness, or irritability, but only health, and peace, and perfect love. As we sit in the shadow and think sadly of the past, which we cannot alter, we naturally turn to the future with the hope that that which had a growth in our lives hitherto only as the growth of a tender sapling under a stone, may have a nobler chance, and in serene light, when the stone has been rolled away from its sepulchre.

Who has not come in contact directly or indirectly with that sorrow of which it is sometimes said, "It is worse than death"? A blight descends on the innocence, purity, or faith of one very dear to the heart. Can words describe the agony of the home on which this sorrow falls? The Christian members of it go close to God in prayer. The erring one goes farther and deeper into the land of the lost. At last it seems as if the earnest pleading were hopeless. They and he are in different worlds. He has left the faith, and love, and life of their home. And by-and-by death stills the long ache of the pleading hearts, and one by one they go home to God. Has their pleading been really in vain? Shall there be no answer to their pathetic cries? It is not so Christ deals with His beloved who have been faithful unto death. The answer awaits them in the

world above. What happened to the Saviour Himself in respect of His disciples shall happen to thousands of His people. They also, denied in their lifetime, perhaps with oaths and curses, shall find the son, the brother, the husband they had lost, on whose spiritual life their death shall have wrought the change which their words and living example failed to work. To them, as to the risen Jesus, an opportunity shall arise to lay bare anew and more tenderly the heart's love to the dear ones who misunderstood it upon earth. And these, in the light of that love, shall have the bless of showing that the prayers had not been in vain, and perhaps of saying, as Peter said to his Saviour, "Dear One, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

It is still more affecting to follow the forward-looking thoughts of those who have erred. When we ourselves are in that case, and when we are sitting silent under the shadow which witnesses of our error, is it any wonder if the thought steals out of our hearts, Shall there ever be a world in which that past shall not still lie as a shadow upon our life? We think of the chances we have missed —of the hopes we have blighted—of the hearts we have grieved. But the gracious Saviour has revealed, through this same case of Peter, the reserves of consolation He has for this side also of the heart's anxiety. Just such thoughts as I have tried to express the penitent disciple might well have been burdened with, as he looked forward to a possible reunion with the Friend he had denied. Yet everything turned out other than he feared. That Friend meets him unexpectedly on the shores of the lake, and drops into his heart the healing question,

"Lovest thou Me?" Where is the resentment He might so justly have felt? Where is the lower place to which the erring one might have been degraded? Where the seclusion in which the offended One might have hid his love? They do not exist. There is no concealment—no keeping back of love. There is only the free, undeserved manifestation of the grace that has never let its object go. And so it will turn out in many a reunited circle in heaven. This wonder of reconcilement, which had for the shame-filled heart of the erring one only a renewal of place and stewardship, is revelation of the future for us. There are treasures of obliteration and pardon and love laid up in heaven, of which Peter's experience was but a foretaste. In that world are a thousand surprises of mercy. For many who painfully know how marred their earthly life has been there will come a day, of which the morning on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias was a foreshowing, when the faces they turned from in their lifetime shall kindle on them with unlooked-for love, and they shall be made to feel by their very smile that this is that new world in which human hearts shall find awaiting them treasures of tenderness and uplifting love, and the fulfilment, not in the Master only, but in each of His servants, of the great old word—"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

IX.

I am aware how homely these conclusions must seem. But the facts we have been in search of at present are

themselves homely. I have been trying to satisfy inquiries which cling about the home circles of earth, and for the time I must seem to be disregardful of the wider horizons in which our lives are set. I am glad, therefore, in closing, to be able to appeal to a principle which respects those horizons while it justifies working in these homely fields. It is that principle which comes to view on the occasions when the Lord is reported to have taught His disciples as they were able to receive His truth. Then, and at other times, He also worked within narrow horizons, and dealt with facts of the homeliest kind. He met the needs of His followers as they arose with just the amount of revelation which satisfied the needs. It was step by step He led them. He only foreshadowed the blessings of the kingdom, while those to whom He spoke were not yet in circumstances to understand them. The heaven He came to reveal was hidden under promises addressed to faith. His life also unfolded in this way. Every new turn of it was a surprise to His disciples. What a surprise the first miracle would be, and the second, and the third! Here was a man whom the very winds and waves obeyed! What a surprise the transfiguration, the resurrection, the ascension! Each new development comes from a sort of ambush in Providence. It is hid from the eyes of the disciples, or only dimly hinted at, until the time is ripe for its full disclosure.

The same principle comes to light in the lives of His people. He leads them step by step towards the new truths, experiences, and ideals of His kingdom, and only as their needs arise. See, to take but one instance, how

immediately He admits His bereaved ones into the inheritance of promise and consolation He has prepared for such! As the shadow darkens over them on one side, doors of light open on the other. The Bible kindles up in many a familiar passage with a light they never observed before. Voices come to them out of the Word with a tender accent which witnesses of the heart of God, and healing touches from a Divine hand begin to fall on their painful wounds.

Heaven will no doubt be much more than the reunion of those sundered by death. Our family circles can be, in relation to its manifold life, and to its wide-reaching horizons, only as beds of daisies and lilies in fields which lie between rising and setting suns. It is the ideal which poets and thinkers, which saints and reformers have sought, but never found. It is the kingdom where there shall be neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Greek nor barbarian, neither male nor female, but where all shall be one in Christ—a glory of righteousness, of love, of worship. The little ventures of speculation into its secrets we make here hardly penetrate beyond the door. But this should be no discouragement. Heaven is the child's inheritance in reserve. To that inheritance, of which at present we can know so little, we are being, step by step, led in faith and trustful expectancy. The rule of knowledge is the same as the rule of life: "One step enough for me." Let us cast our curious, as well as our weary, thinking for the morrow away. Let us stay up our souls by a great trust in God. To-morrow and to-morrow, until we reach the eternal home, are in His keeping. He will not fail us as they arrive.

It is not to a life of repression this life subjects us; it is not as if its natural outcome were, "we must submit and wait." On the contrary, it admits us to a life of enlargement and freedom. It leads to the soul's emergence out of strait places into the largeness of God's inheritance; it brings us out from narrow visions to broad expectancy, and it takes us along a line of reserved surprises, each of which shall be more glorious than that which has been seen before.

It is very touching to read in the journal of one of the latest travellers in Africa, towards the end of his long tale of hardship, perseverance, and suffering—when his exhausting march across the continent was drawing to a close; when, footsore and sick, with only rags to cover him, without supplies for his followers or himself, except what he borrowed at usurious prices from an unprincipled trader—how, one day, as he came through the passes of the mountains, his soul leaped up within him as he saw a blue streak in the distance—a line of clear shining which at first seemed up in the sky—and knew it to be the sea, which he had been marching towards for three weary years, the end of his toilsome but glorious walk, and the highway to his English home. It is more touching still to read of the kindness he received from the moment he re-entered the pale of civilised life, and of the good Samaritans who tended him in sickness, and nursed him till he was well, and of the welcome he received on the coast, when English eyes that had been moist with the thought that letters which were waiting for him might never be called for, bent forward and looked into his, and horny hands were laid on his

shoulders, and a thankful heart gave him welcome in the words, "Cameron! Thank God!" And more touching than all it is, at the very end, to come upon the simple words, "And on Sunday we arrived in the Mersey, and among the crowds that waited on the landing-stage I saw the dear face of my mother."

These were reserves of mercy, one by one encountered, experienced, enjoyed. But all along it lay in the Providence of God to bestow them; all along they had been prepared, and were laid up in store, and were part of the inheritance of compensation which the brave young traveller was to receive. Reserves as real and more certain are stored up by God at the end of life's march for the pilgrims and prisoners of Christian hope. The life in heaven will be an unending series of surprises as it discloses its blessings and glories to our view.

Already we have been admitted to something of this experience. In the higher life of faith we have heard the murmurs of that sea which is before the throne of God. And in the sympathies of Christian hearts, and in reunions of long-parted friends, we have had foreshadowings of the reserves of joy in the eternal home, when we shall have back again the touch of the vanished hand, and hear once more the sound of the voice that is still.

MARRIAGE SERVICE.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

"GOD setteth the solitary in families." He does this by the pure and homely ordinance of marriage. And He has, in consequence, put this great honour on the marriage relationship, that it is one of the main fountains of well-being in social life. When it is well with the marriage relationship in a nation, and its duties are piously and faithfully observed, it is well with the nation. When it is disregarded or desecrated, it is not well. Trouble or revolution are not far away. The occasion is one on which we ought to ask the blessing of God, and I invite you, therefore, to join with me in prayer.

Eternal God, Creator and Preserver of all Mankind, Giver of all Spiritual Grace, Author of Everlasting Life, bless this marriage company, and very especially these Thy two servants. Endow them with every Christian grace. May Thy Word enrich them. May Thy righteousness invest them. Help them to be true and faithful to Thee, their Lord and Redeemer, that they may be faithful and true to each other in the vow and covenant on which they are about to enter. Bless the families to which each of them belongs. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

In the good providence of God you two have been led to desire to enter upon the estate of marriage. It is an

honourable estate, instituted by God in the time of man's innocency. Christ sanctioned and adorned it by His presence and first miracle at Cana in Galilee, and it is commended of Saint Paul to be honourable among all men, and God has put this great honour upon it, that He has made it the well-head of social life.

In the beginning the Lord God said—"It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help-meet for him. And He made woman. And He brought her unto the man. Therefrom shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one."

It is a relationship, therefore, of so great importance, and with this great honour put upon it by God, that it should not lightly or thoughtlessly be entered into, and not at all, if there be any impediment, by reason of which it should be an unlawful union.

[Then followed a rich and varied devotional service, including the usual vows and legal forms, with carefully selected Scripture and fervent prayers in well-weighed words.]

CONCLUDING ADDRESS.

The union into which you have entered is one for which God has prepared great blessings. But in this, as in all other relationships of our life, He has made the enjoyment of the blessings to depend on the fulfilment of conditions.

Listen, therefore, further, while I briefly name to you the conditions of well-being in married life:

I.

The first is fidelity to your respective duties.

It belongs to the husband to be the bread-winner of the house, to the wife to turn the house into a home.

The husband is the wall which is to protect the home; the wife, the hearthfire which is to fill the home with its light.

Industry, uprightness, courage, strength—these are the qualities of the man. Industry, patience, thrift, meekness, charity—these are the qualities of the woman.

II.

The next condition of well-being is observance of the Divinely-appointed relationship to each other. As you have just heard, the husband is head, the wife is to be subject to her husband. But lest this should be misunderstood, lest the husband should think that he is a master, and the wife, that she is an inferior, it has been set forth in the Word read to you, that the husband is head as Christ is head over His Church: and the wife subject no otherwise than the Church is subject to Christ. The headship and the subjection are both of love.

III.

A third condition of wellbeing is that husband and wife love each other. You have been lovers before marriage, be lovers after it as well.

Of all places on the earth one of the dreariest is a home where this love does not exist. The place which most nearly resembles Paradise is the home that is full

of it. Therefore, set yourselves to increase in love. Seek each of you first the other's good. Bear each other's burdens. Soothe each other's sorrows. Sympathise in each other's joys. And as you are to have one home, see that you have but one heart.

IV.

But above all other conditions of wellbeing is this which I name last, that you live together in the fear of God. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. It is the beginning of domestic happiness as well. A home where God is not acknowledged wants the very foundation of happiness. Invite Him, therefore, to the home you are about to build. Keep a place for Him always at your fireside, at your table, and in your heart.

[Dr. MacLeod adapted his service to different occasions. Thus to a young minister and his bride he said—

"You are going forth to build a home. Your past lives are an assurance that it will be a Christian home. But among Christian homes it will be a manse. Your home will be central to the whole life of a congregation. Sympathies with the joys and sorrows of the flock will go forth from it. Burdened hearts will come knocking at your door to find ease in your counsel. Joyous hearts will ask you to share their joy. The young maiden will tell you her tender secrets. The anxious mother will speak to you about her boys and girls. Toiling and busy men will sometimes seek some brightness in dark times in your words. When the great shadow falls on any home in the flock, it is to the manse the sad tidings

will first come. You will be father and mother to the flock. The little children will come round about you, and look for your smiles. The young lads going to business, or college, or the sea, will reserve their last farewell outside of their own home for you.

All these things, entering into your home-life, will enrich it and solemnise it. The threads of other lives will be woven into yours. And opportunity will in these and other ways come often into your home for prayer, for counsel, for sympathy. Many and many a time, if God spare you, you will find occasion to lift the hearts of your people to God, and many shall grow up to bless you and call you blessed. May your own home be filled with the peace and joy of God."]

You are setting out together on a journey, the experiences of which no one knows but God. But it will be like all other journeys of our human life in this, that it will bring you into contact with both joys and sorrows. Do not forget that both joy and sorrow are set to bring us nearer to God. God is the true end of your united life, your souls' true home. He offers Himself to you both this day as your eternal inheritance. Live in the light and hope of that inheritance, and of the grand position, "*Heirs together of the grace of life.*" And amid all the vicissitudes of earth, God will be your refuge and your strength—the protector and guide of your way.

Now: The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and

give you peace. And so fill you with all benediction and grace, that ye may live together in this life, so that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

THE END.

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